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THESIS

An Examination of the Skills, Experience,
Training and Education Requirements Needed
as a Functional Area 97 Officer in the
Army Acquisition Corps

by

Mark Douglas Lumb

December, 1991

Thesis Advisor:

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*An Examination of the Skills, Experience,
Training, and Education Requirements Needed
as a Functional Area 97 Officer in the
Army Acquisition Corps*

by

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*Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of*

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ABSTRACT

The passage of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) and the creation of the Army Acquisition Corps have both necessitated a shift in the way the Army acquires and trains its Contracting and Industrial Management (FA 97) officers.

This thesis examines the environment of the process of defense acquisition beginning in the early 1980's and traces the history of the legislative procurement reform that lead to the passage of DAWIA and the creation of a separate corps of acquisition professionals in the United States Army.

The characterization of the present atmosphere of defense acquisition is an austere one and because of this, FA 97 officers must be trained and educated in the most cost effective and productive manner available. Most importantly, the skills they learn must be those that are the most critical to their future performance in the FA 97 arena. Therefore, interviews were conducted with FA 97 officers in the field to determine which skills, classified into technical and management categories, were the most critical to FA 97 job performance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BROAD SCOPE OF THE THESIS

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus described the nature of time by comparing it to flowing water, saying that "no man can step twice into the same river." [Ref.1, pg 22] The river of defense acquisition and its ever changing flow of procurement reform is like the river of time, as Government studies, defense initiatives, blue ribbon panels, and a seemingly endless stream of patchwork defense legislation all buffet and rock the tiny raft on which floats the world of the military and civilian acquisition professional.

It has also been said though, by philosophers of unknown origin, that relatively little occurs that has not done so already, at some distant place, in some time long past. Again, the world of defense procurement fits in comfortably under the umbrella of this general oversimplification of history. The acquisition environment is a cyclical one, its fortunes rising and ebbing with that of the defense establishment as a whole. One need only survey the generally sorry state of the nation's armed forces and the procurement structure that supported them before any of the major conflicts of the last two hundred years, the Civil War, World War I, WW II, Korea, and Vietnam, for example, to be convinced of this symbiotic relationship.

Once war is upon the nation though, there is a singular rush to do whatever is necessary to beat back the menace and return to the status quo ante bellum. Unfortunately, for the defense establishment, "status quo ante bellum" often means rapid demobilization and dismantling of the nation's defense infrastructure. The acquisition workforce is not immune to the headlong rush to dismantle the defense establishment after what is often and naively viewed as the last war this nation will ever have to fight.

During the last decade however, wiser counsel has prevailed against the rush to disestablish the gains of the defense buildup during the years of the Reagan administration and its benefits for our once "hollow" Army.

The creation of the Army Acquisition Corps and the passage of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) have served notice to the nation as a whole that we can ill afford to pursue the boom and bust cycles of defense preparedness which have characterized much of our nation's history.

The paradigm through which we viewed the nature of the world's balance of power has irrevocably shifted with the collapse of Communism and the Warsaw Pact. The assumptions upon which our defense establishment was solidly built during the years of the cold war are no longer valid. The need for a large standing defense force to confront the menace of the unholy alliance of the communist armies of eastern Europe no longer exists. The American defense establishment is shrinking at an ever increasing rate as

the realization takes hold that the nation requires a smaller, more mobile, more agile, but no less lethal, combination of armed services.

At the same time the defense establishment as a whole is shrinking, so to is the mechanism in place to equip it and procure for it the weapons, services, and equipment it needs for mission accomplishment. Just as the armed services are being streamlined for agility and lethality, so too must the defense acquisition establishment be streamlined in order to provide the best possible support for this new defense structure.

B. THE ACQUISITION OF FUTURE FUNCTIONAL AREA 97 OFFICERS

The Army Acquisition Corps and DAWIA are the vehicles through which the newly potent Functional Area 97 (Contracting and Industrial Management) officer will be able to achieve his maximum effective potential. The provisions of DAWIA mandate a lean and exceptionally well-trained cadre of professional acquisition officers and civilians that will be able to supply and equip the armed services with the best possible equipment of the best value at a commensurate price to the Government, well into the next century. The difficulty and critical nature of this task is greatly increased by the ever shrinking nature of defense funding and general resourcing. The FA 97 officer will have to bring all of his considerable talents and skills to bear in order to achieve his mandate of accomplishing more with less.

The Army and its Corps of acquisition professionals must ensure then, that its FA 97 officers acquire those skills which will best equip them to meet the difficult challenges which lie ahead. The FA 97 officer must not only become proficient in those skills which have the highest return for the acquisition profession, but he must also acquire them in a manner that is both the most cost effective and resource and time efficient.

The limited nature of the resource environment of the foreseeable future makes it a defense imperative that the funds the nation entrusts to her acquisition professionals not be squandered. The trust of the nation must be garnered and husbanded most carefully so as to preclude the disaster which would befall the Armed Forces should the country decide that her precious resources were being wasted in frivolous and needlessly expensive weapon systems and equipment.

C. TRAINING, EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

Presently, the Army relies on a three tiered approach to "manufacture" its Contracting and Industrial Management officers. The three tiers are training, education and experience; but not necessarily in that order of occurrence or priority.

Training is primarily "hands-on" and deals with the "how to" of defense procurement. It is most commonly accomplished through formal and ad hoc on-the-job programs at each of the organizations where an entry level FA 97 officer can be assigned, most commonly to a major buying command. The Training With Industry Program

(TWI) is also a component of this tier of the manufacturing process and trains officers through a ten month internship at a major civilian defense contractor.

Education consists of the Advanced Civil Schooling (ACS) program, which allows selected officers the opportunity to earn a masters degree at Government expense. Education is viewed as the realm of the theory of defense procurement and concerns itself with the "why" of acquisition vice the "how to." While training refers to the imparting of ability to accomplish repetitive tasks, education is that which imparts the ability to reason independently; to analyze a presentation of data, distinguish the relevant from the trivial and arrive at a sound and supportable conclusion which can be translated into a decision or a plan of action.

Experience is the frame of reference gained from actually working in the procurement environment. It consists of all of the endless impressions and intangibles derived from being immersed in the actual environment - as opposed to having it described in the artificial environment of a classroom. Education and training are invaluable, but without a frame of reference to translate them into coherent actions, their effectiveness and value are reduced considerably.

D. SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis then, is to explore and delineate the skills that an FA 97 officer will need to excel in the defense

acquisition environment of the 1990's and beyond. These skills are both technical and managerial. They include empirically oriented reasoning abilities and the subjective and amorphous skills of leadership. The efficiency of the Army's three tiered approach will also be looked at and the value of graduate education, the TWI program and on-the-job training will be discussed.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

A comprehensive review of the literature was first accomplished to establish the history of how the present state of the defense acquisition establishment came to be and to examine the impetus behind the creation of the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) and the ramifications of the passage of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA). The recent history of defense procurement reform through legislative initiative bears directly on this issue and is discussed beginning with the statutes governing the length of service of project managers of major defense acquisition programs. Its progression is traced through the spare parts scandals of the 1980's and concludes with the passage of DAWIA and the creation of the AAC.

B. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH EFFORT

The scope of the research effort in this thesis is on the delineation of the skills, experiences/assignment tours, and abilities required to operate successfully as an FA 97 officer in the Army Acquisition Corps. The main focus of this research effort is on the development of a viable and attainable set of critical and highly desirable skills for FA 97 officers of all grades, but with special attention paid to those in their entry level FA 97

position.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Primary:

What are the requisite skills, abilities, knowledge factors, and assignments that are appropriate for a Functional Area (FA) 97 officer in the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) ?

2. Subsidiary:

a. How did the current state of the Army contracting officer and the Army Acquisition Corps come to be ?

b. What are the requirements for FA 97 officers as mandated by the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) ?

c. What is the current state of thinking as expressed by experienced FA 97 officers as to what the knowledge and skill base of a FA 97 officer should be ?

d. What skills are critical for an FA 97 officer to possess ?

e. What skills are highly desirable for an FA 97 officer to possess ?

f. How might technical and managerial skills be distinguished from each other ?

D. CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH EFFORT

1. Comprehensive search of the literature.
2. Phone and personal interviews with FA 97 officers at the FA 97 Management Branch; the FA 97 Proponent; Headquarters, Department of the Army; Headquarters, Army Material Command (AMC); various major subordinate commands of AMC.
3. Typical questions asked during face-to face-interviews:
 - a. What is the most critical skill for a FA 97 officer to have ?
 - b. What are other critical skills ?
 - c. What skills are highly desirable ?
 - d. Which set of skills is more important; technical or managerial ?
 - e. What is the best way for an FA 97 officer to attain these aforementioned skills ?
 - f. How valuable is on-the-job training (OJT) ?
 - g. How valuable is the Training With Industry Program (TWI) ?
 - h. How valuable is a masters degree in business ?
 - i. In order of that which prepares you best to perform as an FA 97, how would you rank order OJT, a masters degree,

and TWI ?

j. What is the most desirable first assignment for an FA 97 officer in terms of that which prepares him best for future assignments in Functional Area 97 ?

k. What do you think about the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) ?

l. What impact do you see the implementation of the provisions of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act having on Functional Area 97 ?

E. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Preliminary Conclusions:

1. The skills considered most critical for officers in FA 97 include:

- Development of a sound sense of business judgement with special emphasis on the fundamentals of financial and cost accounting;

- Thorough familiarity with the basic tenets of contract law and the provisions of the regulatory guidelines from the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) to the next highest command's supplement.

- Computer literacy to include a working

knowledge of wordprocessing, database management and graphics software.

- The ability to properly prepare for and conduct negotiations with a civilian contractor.

- The ability to express thoughts in writing in a clear and succinct manner.

- Possession of the requisite leadership and management temperaments attendant with grade and time in service.

2. The skills considered highly desirable for officers in Functional Area 97 include:

- Those which are derived from having participated in the TWI program.

- The ability to present a formal military briefing.

3. Other observations include:

- The institution of the Army Acquisition

Corps structure has been received very poorly among FA 97 officers in the field.

- The implementation of the provisions of DAWIA is seen by FA 97 officers in the field as striking a major blow against military dominance of the defense procurement business.

4. Recommendations include:

- The establishment at each major subordinate command of the Army Material Command of a transition course to facilitate the adjustment of basic branch officers to the civilian dominated environment of defense contracting.

- The institution of a career management policy that requires an Fa 97 officer's initial assignment to be with a buying command as a buyer before participation in TWI or ACS.

F. LIMITATIONS

This thesis is limited in its scope in that the broad topic areas of the critical skills for FA 97 officers are touched upon only in a general sense. There is no attempt to break the tasks identified herein into their component and subcomponent tasks. This study does not purport to define an all-inclusive list of all of the tasks an FA 97 officer could expect to have to perform during a usual career progression. Additionally, the conclusions drawn from the number of interviews conducted is not statistically significant.

G. ASSUMPTIONS

This study is predicated upon the assumption that the process of defense acquisition is a business as serious and professional as any of the commonly recognized "civilian" professions, and as such its practitioners should be endowed with a set of clearly identifiable skills. These skills must be acquired in a manner that is at once the most cost effective for the Government and the most productive for the defense acquisition specialist.

H. DEFINITIONS

1. Army Acquisition Corps:

"...an elite group of dedicated highly qualified officer and civilian acquisition experts who serve in critical acquisition management positions." [Ref.12,pg 2].

2. Functional Area 97, Contracting and Industrial Management:

"The FA 97 officer is a highly skilled professional soldier who must bridge the gap between civilian industry and the military. Officers in this specialty are faced with the challenge of ensuring that the Defense acquisition process procures the required weapon systems, supplies, and services to support and sustain the readiness of our combat forces." [Ref.10,pg 1]

I. SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an outline of the purpose of this thesis, its scope and focus, and its methodology. Preliminary conclusions and recommendations were presented. The next chapter will discuss the background of the current defense acquisition environment to include a look at the legislative history of recent attempt at procurement reform. The events leading to the creation of the Army Acquisition Corps will be covered and the impact of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act will be explored.

III. BACKGROUND

A. INTRODUCTION

Besieged from all quarters in the war on procurement waste and mismanagement, the Army realized in the latter years of the 1980's that it would have to make some radical changes in the way it chose, trained, and assigned its procurement officers. Although the Army was to emerge relatively unscathed from the firestorm created by the procurement scandals that rocked the 1980's, the embarrassment of the "Sergeant York" Division Air Defense Weapon System notwithstanding, it did recognize the shortcomings of its development system for civilian and military acquisition professionals. [Ref.43,pgs 2-3]

Not lost on the Army too, was the irony of the situation that precipitated the creation of the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC). The Air Force, perhaps the one Service which bore the brunt of the public outrage over allegations of procurement mismanagement, is also the only Service with a procurement officer development system which accesses officers directly from entry level and allows them to "single track" as procurement specialists for their entire careers. [Ref.30] The Army, however, has traditionally maintained that a "dual tracking" system for officer career management is, in most instances, the most effective use of officer corps talent. [Ref.17] By managing officers under a dual tracking system, the

Army initially accesses them into a "basic branch," e.g. Infantry, Aviation, Quartermaster, etc. After approximately eight years of service, officers are assigned a Functional Area (FA). Functional Areas include such specialties as Public Affairs, Operations Research, Foreign Area Specialist and Contracting and Industrial Management.

From the eighth year of service until retirement, Army officers historically have been assigned in an alternating pattern of basic branch and functional area assignments. While this arguably made for a "well rounded" officer, it did little to foster the expertise needed to perform and excel in the more technical functional areas, contracting and industrial management chief among them. [Ref.17]

B. LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The attention focused on the procurement process as a result of the highly publicized "spare parts scandals" of the early 1980's, lead, in part, to the passage of Public Law 98-525 in October of 1984. P.L. 98-525's major stipulation was that managers of major defense acquisition programs must serve as such for at least four years or until completion of a program milestone. [Ref. 16,pg 19] Following close on the heels of P.L. 98-525, was P.L. 99-145, enacted in 1985, which required that the Services delineate the education and training necessary to qualify an officer for assignment as a program manager. [Ref.40]

In July of 1985, President Reagan established the "Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management" and chartered it to:

...study the issues surrounding defense management and organizations,...review the procedures for developing and fielding military systems incorporating new technologies in a timely fashion,...and to make recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness and stability of resource allocation for defense systems. [Ref.45,pg 3]

Taking its name from Chairman David Packard, the Commission delivered its final report in the summer of 1986. The report outlined the fragmented nature of acquisition responsibility within the Department of Defense (DOD) and noted that "the authority for acquisition execution and accountability for its results was diluted, depriving program managers of control over their own programs". [Ref.45,pg 12] Perhaps most importantly though, the Packard Commission exposed the need for change in the way that DOD acquired and managed its procurement workforce. Specifically, the Commission called for the establishment of educational and experience requirements for the civilian and military acquisition workforce and expanded educational and professional opportunities for civilians. [Ref.45,pg 14]

The passage in 1986 of Public Law 99-661, the Defense Acquisition Improvement Act, commonly known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act, was the first tangible result of the impact of the Packard Commission. Goldwater-Nichols created the position of Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition (USDA) and delineated the scope of its authority as encompassing "the supervision of all military and civilian personnel in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) with regard to matters for which the Under Secretary

has responsibility". [Ref.6,pg 17] Furthermore, Goldwater-Nichols mandated the creation of a plan to "enhance the professionalism of, and career opportunities for, the acquisition personnel of DOD". [Ref.6,pg 18]

The legislation specified that these plans should include "standards for the examination, appointment, classification, training, and assignment of acquisition personnel as well as determination of the feasibility of designating certain acquisition positions within DOD as professional ones". [Ref.1,pg 24]

The next step in the creation of a professional corps of Army acquisition specialists occurred in August of 1988 with the promulgation of DOD Directive 5000.52. This directive consolidated the requirements and criteria for eligibility, experience, training, and assignment for all DOD acquisition specialists and applied these consolidated requirements to both civilian and military personnel. These newly revamped criteria were used to screen individuals considered for assignment to acquisition management positions. [Ref.14,pg 4]

Directed by President Bush to improve the performance of the defense acquisition process and to find ways to more effectively manage DOD's shrinking resources, the Secretary of Defense committed his department to nothing less than the substantive changes that would be required to meet the President's mandate. The Defense Management Review (DMR) of 1989 was the crystallization of this commitment as it became the Secretary's vehicle to further study the progress of the implementation of the recommendations of

the Packard Commission. [Ref.17,pg 52]

Subsequently, the DMR found that in order to reduce operating costs as necessitated by rapidly diminishing budgets while maintaining the prescribed level of military strength, the Services in general, and the Army in particular, would have to initiate extensive reorganization and realignment of their procurement command structure. Most significantly for the yet to be created AAC, was the pronouncement that in order to enhance the performance of weapon system procurement efforts, the Army would necessarily have to focus on the professional development and career opportunities for its acquisition workforce. [Ref.8,pg 40]

It was in this environment of the breakdown of the acquisition process, the intense, but fleeting, public outrage following every new admission of excess, and the legislative remedies hastily assembled in righteous indignation to fix the broken system, that both the Army Acquisition Corps and the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act came into being. [Ref.17,pg 20]

C. CREATION OF THE ARMY ACQUISITION CORPS

The official Army information pamphlet on the Army Acquisition Corps states that:

The Army depends on the quality of its material and weapon systems to meet its national security responsibilities. It is imperative that our development and acquisition processes permit us to exploit fully the great promise of American technology while at the same time maintaining the streamlined and efficient management structures. In light of this, the Army Acquisition Corps was formed to attract, select, develop and retain the most capable members of the workforce to fill our critical acquisition positions. [Ref.12,pg 1]

As the precursor to this charter, the Army Acquisition Corps formally came into being, in January of 1989, following a joint announcement from the Army Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Army. This new corps of acquisition professionals, said the chief civilian and military executives of the Army, would provide a corps of dedicated professionals who are experts in systems development and procurement. More importantly, they went on to add, the AAC would integrate education, training, experience, selection, and promotion processes for all military and civilian members of the acquisition corps. [Ref.8,pg 41]

Initial plans called for an end strength of 1,350 military and civilian members occupying critically coded acquisition positions in program executive offices, program management offices and support and staff positions in Army Support Commands and major field headquarters. To fill these 1350 critically coded positions, a pool of some 2,900 "acquisition corps candidates" would have to be identified at approximately their eighth year of service and selected for special assignment and training to eventually be qualified to fill a critical position. [Ref.30]

The Army Acquisition Corps is composed of the following Military Functional Areas:

1. FA 51; Research and Development.
2. FA 53; Systems Automation.
3. FA 97; Contracting and Industrial Management.
4. FA 15/35; Aviation/Intelligence.

[Ref.12,pg 3]

Although Army Officers selected for accession into the AAC continue to wear the insignia of their basic branch, e.g. Infantry, Aviation, Ordnance, etc, they will no longer compete for assignments or command within their basic branches nor will they compete for promotion with their basic branch peers. The AAC is a fundamentally new career track, with the stipulation that members are to be assigned to procurement programs related to their basic branches. This relationship between an officer's basic branch and assignments within the AAC makes the best use of eight years of branch experience and brings a "muddy boots" perspective to the sometimes rarified atmosphere of defense procurement. [Ref.30]

For civilians, the AAC will also operate as a separate career track, but with one major difference. Civilians will compete for assignments both inside the framework of the AAC as well as in their traditional specialty. The AAC will pull those who are already at middle management positions and in different occupational areas and provide them with a broader, yet common, acquisition education and training base. Civilian AAC members, like their military counterparts, fall under the cognizance of the Army Acquisition Executive (AAE). [Ref.2,pgs 36-37] The AAE is the functional chief and proponent of the AAC and is charged with the responsibility for administering both military and civilian AAC members. [Ref.14,pg 10]

D. FA 97 PARTICIPATION IN THE ACQUISITION CORPS

The FA 97 Officer is a highly skilled, professional soldier who must bridge the management gap between

civilian industry and the military. Officers in this specialty are faced with the challenge of ensuring that the Defense acquisition process procures the required weapon systems, supplies, and services to support and sustain the readiness of our combat forces.
[Ref.10,pg 1]

In support of this charter, officer positions in Functional Area 97 are structured to run the gamut of both staff and operational organizations at all levels of the Army. Open equally to both male and female officers for example, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Defense Logistics Agency, and various Joint Duty Assignments, are all illustrative of the diversity of assignment possibilities for FA 97 officers. [Ref.10,pgs 2-3]

Presently there are slightly over 1,800 officers with the FA 97 designation out of a total procurement population of approximately 11,800. Thus the ratio of civilian 1100 series contracting specialists to military contracting and industrial management officers is almost 10:1. [Ref.29]

Indicative of the special relationship between the military and civilian industry in the procurement arena, are the primary responsibilities that a FA 97 officer can expect to be charged with. These responsibilities can come at an assignment at Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), the U.S. Army Material Command (AMC), other Major Commands (MACOMs) within the Army, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), or while assigned against a Joint Duty position. [Ref.10,pg 1]

First among these responsibilities are those of a Procurement Staff Officer (PSO). A PSO is primarily concerned with the "overall development, implementation, management, direction and

control of procurement programs, program planning and general supervision of major procurement activities or functions." [Ref.10 pg 2] Next, an FA 97 officer can expect to eventually assume the duties of a Contracts Management Officer (CMO). A CMO is "warranted to legally obligate the U.S. Government by entering into and terminating binding contractual agreements with a wide variety of corporate entities." [Ref.10,pg 2] Third is the mantel of an Industrial Management Officer (IMO) who is "responsible for applying industrial, manufacturing and production technical expertise within the procurement function." [Ref.10,pg 3]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, FA 97 Officers can anticipate competition for command positions at the O-5 and O-6 level. Chief among these are command of an Army Procurement Agency, command of a Defense Contract Management Region (DCMR), command of a Defense Contract Management Area of Operations (DCMAO), or command of a Defense Plant Representative Office (DPRO). [Ref.38,pg 4]

As previously discussed, the Contracting and Industrial Management Functional Area is not aligned with any of the basic branches of the Army. Award of the FA 97 designation is done only after an officer's basic branch qualification, usually occurring at around the eighth year of commissioned service. Until October of 1991, officers who were designated as FA 97's were not necessarily, nor automatically, also accessed into the Acquisition Corps. In fact, an FA 97 officer previously could pursue one of three possible career tracks. The first of these included the "dual

track" path in which the officer alternated between basic branch and FA 97 assignments. The second was the "single track" in which the officer served only in FA 97 assignments for the remainder of his career. The last of the three tracks was accession into the Army Acquisition Corps where the officer served only in FA 97 assignments coded for AAC designees. The AAC track was the only one of the three that did not subject the officer to a branch immaterial assignment, i.e. recruiting officer, Reserve Officer Training Command, or reserve component adviser. [Ref.10]

However, on 11 October of 1991, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Gordon Sullivan, approved initiatives that will result in a sweeping reorganization of Functional Area 97 and its relationship to the Army Acquisition Corps.

The most significant of the changes is the decision to bring all FA 97 Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel command positions under the cognizance of the Acquisition Corps. Beginning with the 1993 command selection board process, only FA 97 officers who are members of the Acquisition Corps will be eligible for consideration for these command positions. There are presently twenty-three 0-6 command positions and twenty 0-5 command positions for FA 97 designees. The command positions are divided between the agencies and organizations previously mentioned. [Ref.38,pg 4]

Additionally, a formal policy has been promulgated which puts FA 97 officers on an equal footing with their FA 51 counterparts in the competition for product manager and program manager assignments. FA 97 officers will compete with all other

Acquisition Corps officers for these positions on a "best qualified" basis i.e., the best qualified officer, regardless of functional area designation, will be selected for the position.

Finally, no longer will FA 97 officers have the option to choose between three distinct career patterns and alternate between assignments in FA 97 and their basic branches. Functional Area 97 has been converted to a single track functional area and will be integrated into the Acquisition Corps. Thus, all FA 97 officers will automatically be AAC members and will pursue a single track career path with assignments only in FA 97. [Ref.38,pg 4]

E. THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Considering the history of legislative procurement reform as discussed here, Title XII of the FY 91 National Defense Authorization Act, commonly known as the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA), can be viewed as the capstone of a decade's long trend, as "DAWIA seeks to build on what has gone before." [Ref.17,pg 50]

The broad effect of DAWIA is a requirement for the establishment of coordinated policies for the management of acquisition personnel amongst all of the Services and the Department of Defense. The Undersecretary of Defense (Acquisition), assisted by the director of acquisition education, training and career development, has primary responsibility within DOD for the uniform implementation of the provisions of DAWIA. The Service Acquisition Executive (SAE), advised by an acquisition

career board, has the responsibility for the recruitment, education and career management for civilian and military acquisition personnel within his own military department. [Ref.17,pg 50]

One of DAWIA's primary requirements is that each of the Services establish a separate corps of acquisition professionals. The other primary requirement is that the Secretary of Defense formally designate a limited number of critical acquisition corps positions and that these positions only be filled by specially qualified acquisition corps members. [Ref.40,sec 1731]

An Army officer accessed into the AAC at the eighth year of service as an 0-3 is given a "4M" code and is designated a "candidate". Only after certain mandated educational and experience levels are met and promotion to 0-4, is an officer's code changed to "4Z", acquisition corps member. [Ref.8,pg 42]

The "acquisition corps" itself is actually limited to 0-4's and GS-13's and above. Since the Army recruits and brings officers into the corps at eight years of service even though the "pin on" point for major is at approximately twelve years, captains accessed into the corps and awaiting promotion to major are acquisition corps "candidates" and do not compete for assignment to any critical acquisition position. Once promotion is realized and full membership attained, a major or lieutenant colonel assigned to a critical position must remain so for at least three years. [Ref.40, sec 1734]

In addition to mandating minimum tour lengths for the more important acquisition jobs, DAWIA also lays down the following

requirements in order for an acquisition corps candidate/member to serve as a contracting officer with a warrant to obligate above the small purchase threshold. First, an AAC member must have completed a specified series of mandatory courses required for that position. For the Army, this consists of the Management of Defense Acquisition Contracts, Basic (MDACC, Basic), taught at the Army Logistics Management Center (ALMC) at Ft Lee, Virginia; Management of Defense Acquisition Contracts, Advanced (MDACC, Advanced), also an ALMC taught course; Principles of Contract Pricing, taught by the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio; Government Contract Law, another AFIT managed course; and the Management of Defense Acquisition (Executive), taught by ALMC. [Ref.10, pgs 5-6]

One of the most important features of DAWIA falls under the rubric of the professionalization of the acquisition workforce. DAWIA mandates no less than a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution with at least twenty-four hours of concentration in one of a number of primarily business-related disciplines. Additionally, DAWIA stipulates that an acquisition professional must have at least four years of contracting experience before being eligible for assignment to a critical acquisition position as a senior contracting official. [Ref.40, sec 1741]

Other education and training programs that must be created to comply with DAWIA include internships for the purpose of providing talented individuals the opportunity for accelerated promotions and

assignments and training to prepare them for entry into the acquisition corps. Also, a series of scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs will be set up to attract qualified candidates for designated acquisition positions. [Ref.40, sec 1743] Finally, DAWIA calls for the creation of a Defense Acquisition University structure and management information system to further the development of acquisition education opportunities. [Ref.40, sec 1746]

Although a dominant theme of DAWIA is the professionalization of the acquisition workforce through the enhancement of training and educational programs and attendant career opportunities, a major thrust is the gradual increase of civilian acquisition professionals over their military brethren. As career paths are established and critical positions designated, the ability to fill them with military officers is restricted. DAWIA stipulates that for an officer to hold a critical acquisition position it must: 1. be required by law; 2. be essential for the performance of the discharge of the duties of the position; or 3. be otherwise necessary. [Ref.40, sec 1722]

The Undersecretary of Defense (Acquisition) is required to submit a list to the Secretary of Defense every year that specifies those acquisition positions that are to be restricted to military officers. The Secretary of Defense is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that qualified civilian professionals have the same opportunities as their military counterparts to meet the requirements for assignment to senior acquisition positions.

"The emphasis of these provisions is to ensure that the 'best qualified' individual, consistent with other applicable laws, is selected for each acquisition position." [Ref.40,sec 1702]

This piece of legislation is not unlike many others in that there are exceptions to its mandated requirements. The educational requirements do not apply to members of the acquisition workforce who have at least ten years of experience in the procurement field as of 1 October, 1991. As of 1 October, 1993 these same provisions do not apply to any members to qualify them to remain in their current, or comparable, positions. Additionally, the qualifying provisions applying to military contracting officers can be waived by the acquisition career program board of the corresponding Service. These waiver provisions of DAWIA provide for minimal disruption and allow for continuity during the implementation phase of the law between what was the Army's Material Acquisition Management Program and its successor, the AAC. [Ref.17,pg 53]

F. RAMIFICATIONS

The single most "troubling" aspect of the provisions of DAWIA for members of the AAC is what could be a threat to the very existence of a special corps of primarily military acquisition specialists. DAWIA might well be the beginning of the end for the Army's fledgling corps. The cause of this concern is the very broad, yet very specific, mandate that the acquisition functions of the Armed Services be civilianized to an extent hitherto unthought of. [Ref.40,sec 1722] In its attempt to legislate quality and

professionalism into the cadre of Army procurement specialists, DAWIA simultaneously, and not accidentally, opens up a great number of heretofore exclusively military billets to DOD civilians. [Ref. 2,pg 36]

The Army has had to back away from its initial estimates of acquisition corps endstrength when confronted with DAWIA's stipulations on grade requirements. Only O-4's and their civilian equivalents and above who have met the requisite education and experience levels, or who have been granted a waiver, can be "official members" of the acquisition corps. The official acquisition corps is smaller under DAWIA then, because of DAWIA's refined definition of what constitutes a member. [Ref.30]

The AAC has also had to abandon plans to send all its junior members back to their basic branches for a "re-greening" assignment of three years at approximately their twelfth year of service. The original plan was for a potential acquisition corps member to either be sent to graduate school or to the Training With Industry (TWI) program and then immediately be sent for a utilization tour and then to this "back to the trenches" tour. The experience level provisions of DAWIA quashed these plans as there is not enough time in one career to satisfy DAWIA and be "re-greened." [Ref.29]

The Army Acquisition Corps however, was not caught terribly unprepared in its efforts to implement the educational requirements of DAWIA. The Army has long had graduate education programs and apprentice training programs with industry for officers. The

challenge, against the backdrop of an uncertain future, lies in creating these same types of educational opportunities for civilians.

The overwhelming opinion expressed to this researcher while conducting interviews for this thesis was that there is no doubt about the absolutely critical need for military representation in the procurement process. A number of personal stories were related in which it was only through the application of the "muddy boots" experience of a military officer that the Government saved large amounts of money by either not purchasing or modifying products that civilian contracting officers were going to buy. Only the military officers, because of their firsthand experience with troops, could know that soldiers in the field neither would not, nor could not, use these products.

The primary concern lies squarely in the context of the ensuing force drawdown. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 91, of which DAWIA is part, mandates an annual four percent reduction in acquisition personnel in the Department of Defense over the next five years. Currently, the General Accounting Office (GAO) places the number of military and civilian procurement workers in DOD at approximately 580,000. If the reductions of the FY 91 Defense Authorization Act are carried out, 107,000 military personnel and civilians will be discharged from the acquisition workforce. Similarly, the implementation of the initiatives of the Defense Management Review of 1989 would see a reduction of some 24,000 civilian positions and 2,000 military ones from the defense

acquisition workforce. [Ref.42,pg 6]

Equally troubling for the military contracting officer, is the stated preference of the DMR to reclassify some 20,000 previously military positions as civilian ones. The force behind this preference appears to be the lower level of compensation for a mid-career civil servant vice that of a comparable military officer. Also, the average tour length of four years appears to give the advantage to civilians in the categories of continuity and savings in relocation costs. [Ref.6,pg 5]

As funding becomes increasingly tighter and manning levels reach all time lows, will the Army be able to justify a significant number of its quality officers filling jobs away from troops ? Jobs that some say can be performed better by civilians anyway ? It is of course too close to call now, but a number of officers interviewed by this researcher predicted that DAWIA, coupled with the defense cutbacks, might spell the end for any kind of career for an officer in the Army Acquisition Corps. Hence, it has become a matter of survival that Army Acquisition Corps officers are educated in the most efficient and effective way possible; that the skills they need to contribute to the overall accomplishment of the Army's mission are identified and given to them and that they become the experts in their field.

G. SUMMARY

This chapter has briefly outlined and described the procurement environment with which defense acquisition

professionals found themselves confronted during the preceding twenty years. The passage of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act can be seen as the logical end-product of prior attempts at legislating procurement reform. Alert for what was on the legislative horizon, Army officials announced the creation of what was to be later mandated by DAWIA, i.e. the Army Acquisition Corps, in early 1989.

As a separate entity of procurement professionals, the AAC is supposed to provide the nurturing atmosphere that will allow the generation of a special class of highly educated, thoroughly trained, and intensely motivated acquisition professionals. With all of its positive aspects however, DAWIA also brings with it the very troubling possibility of the complete civilianization of the business of acquisition, as its provisions mandate continually increasing civilian presence on the procurement stage.

The proceeding chapter will move to the specifics of the nature of the skill base necessary for successful performance as an FA 97 officer. The questions asked of the officers interviewed in the field will be enumerated and their answers laid forth.

IV. DATA PRESENTATION

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Current Assignments of Interviewees

A total of twenty-four officers were interviewed at ten different organizations. The breakdown of interviews at each officer's current organization of assignment is as follows:

AVIATION SUPPORT COMMAND, (AVSCOM), St Louis, Missouri: 2

TANK AND AUTOMOTIVE COMMAND, (TACOM), Warren, Michigan: 4

COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRONIC COMMAND, (CECOM), Ft Monmouth, New Jersey : 4

MISSILE COMMAND, (MICOM), Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama: 3

TROOP SUPPORT COMMAND, (TROSCOM), St Louis, Missouri: 1

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY, (DLA), Cameron Station, Alexandria, Virginia: 2

DEFENSE SERVICES MANAGEMENT COLLEGE, (DSMC), Ft Belvoir, Virginia: 2

OFFICE OF THE FUNCTIONAL AREA 97 PROPONENT, Alexandria, Virginia: 1

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND, (HQ,AMC), Alexandria, Virginia: 3

PENTAGON, Washington, D.C.: 2

2. Rank And Length of Service

All interviewees were commissioned U.S. Army officers with the Functional Area (FA) 97 (Contracting and Industrial Management)

designation. The rank of the interviewees ranged from Captain (O-3) to Colonel (O-6). The average length of commissioned service was fourteen years. The shortest length of service was twelve years and the longest was twenty-four years. The average length of total time spent in FA 97 assignments was three years. The officer with the least amount of FA 97 experience had four months. The greatest amount of time (cumulative) spent in FA 97 assignments was over seven years. The explicit breakdown of interviewees by rank is as follows:

CAPTAIN (O-3): 1

MAJOR (O-4) : 11

LIEUTENANT COLONEL (O-5): 6

COLONEL (O-6): 6

3. Types of Contracting Experience

All of the interviewees were asked to briefly sketch their assignment history, with emphasis on their FA 97 assignments, as an individual officer's answers could conceivably vary considerably based on type, length, and number of FA 97 assignments served. Additionally, the area of contracting in which the interviewee served, e.g. major systems procurement or installation level contracting, could be expected to "color" the answers that this researcher received in response to questions posed.

A variety of assignments and contracting experience came to light, but the preponderance of experience was in areas other than contracting for major weapon systems.

Of the twenty-four officers interviewed, three had never possessed a contracting warrant of any type. The remainder had all been warranted at various times in their careers from \$25,000 up to an unlimited warrant. The following numbers of officers had experience in these areas:

PROCURING/ADMINISTRATIVE CONTRACTING OFFICER: 21

MAJOR WEAPON SYSTEM PROCUREMENT: 3

COMMANDER, MAJOR CONTRACTING ACTIVITY: 3

POST, CAMP & STATION LEVEL CONTRACTING: 1

SMALL PURCHASE CONTRACTING: 21

SPARES PROCUREMENT: 21

CONTINGENCY CONTRACTING: 1

4. Basic Branches

Three of the twenty-four officers had served in branches other than their current ones because of branch detailing at commissioning or branch transferring at some time during their careers. The current branches of the interviewees are:

INFANTRY: 2

ARMOR: 1

FIELD ARTILLERY: 2

AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY: 1

AVIATION: 4

SIGNAL CORPS: 2

MILITARY POLICE: 1

ORDNANCE: 5

QUARTERMASTER CORPS: 5

CHEMICAL CORPS: 1

5. Educational Background

Seventy-five percent of the interviewees had masters degrees in business management or business administration. Of this seventy-five percent, eleven percent had degrees in contracting and industrial management from the Florida Institute of Technology through its extension program at Ft Lee, Virginia. All of the twenty-one officers who currently possess or had possessed warrants at some time in their careers have completed the four required courses offered by the Army Logistics Management College (ALMC) at Ft Lee. (These are the basic and advanced contracting courses, cost and pricing, and the contract law course). Additionally, twenty percent of the interviewees had participated in the Training With Industry Program, sixteen percent were graduates of the ALMC Program Manager's course and four percent were graduates of the Material Acquisition Management Course.

B. QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE MOST CRITICAL SKILL THAT AN FA 97 OFFICER MUST POSSESS IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY DISCHARGE THE FULL RANGE OF DUTIES HE MAY HAVE WHILE POSTED TO THE FULL RANGE OF FA 97 ASSIGNMENTS ?

a. GOOD BUSINESS SENSE

Fully eighty percent of the interviewees emphatically replied that "a good business sense," derived from "a general, but solid

business background," was the skill most critical to success as a FA 97 officer. They went on to add that regardless of the specific assignment, this business acumen provides the solid foundation that the Army contracting officer needs to perform effectively.

b. NO PARTICULAR SKILL

Eight percent of the respondents stated that no particular skill was especially critical and that although a "business background" was "good to have," the lack of such would not render a contracting officer ineffective. Their assertion was that everything that a FA 97 officer needs to know to be able to do his job, can be learned on the job.

c. COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

Eight percent stated that "communication skills were absolutely the most critical..." to success as a contracting officer. The respondents in this category defined "communications skills" as those which allow an officer to transfer information and convey meaning orally and through use of the written word.

d. CONTRACT LAW

The remaining four percent made a case for a thorough understanding of "the legal proprieties of contracting" as the most critical skill amongst all of those a contracting officer must have for "survival." Although only this small percentage stated that a rigorous grounding in the intricacies of contract law was the most

important skill that a contracting officer should possess, over half of the total number of interviewees mentioned at some time during the course of their interview that a knowledge of the regulations was critical. Of particular importance said this group, was an immediate working knowledge of the legal ramifications and regulatory clauses pertaining to contract disputes and terminations.

e. SPECIALIZED ACCOUNTING SKILL

Of the eighty percent who responded positively about the need for a business background, eighteen percent strongly asserted to this researcher that a mere "background" in business was not sufficient. These officers stated that a background of the type obtained through a rigorous Masters Of Business Administration (MBA) program, received at a respected graduate institution, was critical to effective job performance. One senior officer stated that an FA 97 officer needs to "understand the business world, and the only way to do that is to be educated like a businessman." This same officer stated that the level of expertise required in the FA 97 area was not unlike that required of Certified Public Accountants (CPA) and that for an FA 97 to pursue an advanced degree in accounting would "not be overkill."

2. WHAT TYPES OF TECHNICAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPING A "STRONG BUSINESS BACKGROUND" AND "A GOOD BUSINESS SENSE ?"

The same eighty percent of officers who answered question #1

with "a strong business background" stated that a sound familiarity with the fundamentals of both financial and cost accounting were the two most important technical aspects of developing an overall sense of business judgement. Furthermore, this same majority of respondents answered that the ability to perform both price and cost analysis, coupled with the ability to structure empirically and objectively based evaluation systems for proposal evaluation was "part and parcel" to having a solid grounding in the basics of business administration as related to contracting skill. Other contributing technical skills are listed here in order of the frequency of the number of times of their mention:

Identify proper clauses for contract type: 20

Understand contract law: 17

Prepare a negotiations position: 17

Determine a fair and reasonable price: 14

Understand contract protests and terminations: 12

Apply results of a Defense Contract Audit Agency audit: 10

Assemble a contract: 7

Understand how contractor accumulates and charges costs: 7

Analyze overhead rates: 5

Write a statement of work: 5

Utilize mathematical forecasting models: 4

Utilize the techniques of quantitative analysis: 4

Understanding Cost Accounting Standards: 4

Understand mechanics of small purchase procedures: 2

Become a Certified Professional Contract Manager (CPCM): 2

Assemble a solicitation document: 1
Utilize the backwards planning process: 1
Employ a learning curve: 1
Understand how to document a contract file: 1
Know Planning, Programming, Budgeting, System (PPBS): 1
Understand cost and schedule control criteria: 1
Understand a contractor's disclosure statement: 1
Use the changes clause: 1
Understand how to modify a contract: 1
Employ Best Value Criteria: 1
Understand a contractor's capitalization process: 1

3. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY FOR AN FA 97 OFFICER TO DEVELOP/OBTAIN THESE SKILLS ?

a. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Fifty-four percent of the respondents stated that because of the ability to focus "on-the-job-training" (OJT) on the specifics of job performance, it was the most efficient and thorough way to obtain the skills discussed in question #1 above. This majority asserted that an officer "with any amount of get-up-and-go" could transition directly from a field assignment with troops in any of the Army's basic branches to an entry level FA 97 assignment and pick up all of the skills needed to function successfully. Stated one officer, who had been transferred from a "very technical" electronics position into the acquisition corps and is working as a contracts specialist at a major buying command; "Army officers have the inherent ability to take whatever job is given them and

apply themselves to it until they become proficient at it."

The amount of time specified in official policy to train an officer before being warranted averaged two years at the major buying commands. One experienced officer stated that despite the official policies of his command, the reality was that some officers were being warranted within six months of assuming a contracting position. Two other officers at different commands said that within four months of assuming duties as a contract specialist and immediately after completion of the MDACC Basic course they "found themselves with an unlimited warrant."

All of the officers who responded, that the best way to develop the necessary FA 97 skills was while working in a FA 97 position, issued a caveat that the mandatory courses offered by the Acquisition Enhancement Program Office (ACE) at Ft Belvoir, Virginia, were an integral part of their definition of on-the-job training. A senior officer at a major subordinate command (MSC) of AMC made this assertion in regards to learning how to perform at his command; "Training is more important than education...better to be a buyer than go to school."

Of the fifty-four percent of officers who stated that learning while working in an FA 97 position was the best way to be trained, over half do not have masters degrees.

One of these officers without a degree declaimed that ..."the schoolhouse (graduate school) doesn't teach you the mechanics of how to do a buy. They teach you what the FAR says and how to stay out of jail, but not the nuts and bolts of buying..." This officer

went on to say that he had never felt disadvantaged by not having a graduate business degree. In his experience, the most important thing was the "mechanics" and the only way to learn the mechanics was to practice them through "hands on" training.

The only officer with contingency contracting experience, obtained during Operation Desert Storm, also asserted that a Masters degree was superfluous. Said he;

It didn't hurt one wit not having one when I deployed (to Saudi Arabia). And as far as I'm concerned the whole reason military contracting officers exist is to deploy in situations like Desert Storm.

b. MASTERS DEGREE

Thirty-three percent of the interviewees stated that they thought a masters degree in business administration was the best way to obtain the skills critical to FA 97 job performance. There was no distinction made between any of the following types of masters programs:

- Fully funded MBA programs at civilian institutions
- Fully funded Masters of Contracting and Acquisition Management at:
 1. Naval Postgraduate School
 2. Florida Institute of Technology
 3. Air Force Institute of Technology
 4. Programs similar to 1 - 3 above.

-Programs at the individual officer's own expense

In supporting his opinion that a masters degree in business is essential to a complete mastery of the full range of talents expected of an FA 97 officer, one respondent said;

If your view of procurement is one of a collection of clerks and low level administrators, then all you need is some on-the-job training and the ACE courses, but if you

hold the wider view that procurement is rightly a profession in all aspects of the word, then you can not do with out graduate level education.

Said another officer presently assigned as the head of a buying team at a major subordinate command of the Army Materiel Command;

Never have I had a job since I've been in the service where I've had to know not only the 'how' but more importantly the 'why' as well. I've never had to be more of an expert than in the job I've got right now.

The percentage of officers who expressed a distinction between the theory and practice of contracting were a minority of the percentage of ones who designated a masters degree as most important to FA 97 skill development. Of the eight officers who listed a masters degree as most important, only three elaborated by distinguishing between the "theory" derived from graduate education and the "nuts and bolts" obtained from actual experience in the workplace. A common thread however, running through what all of those who favored the masters degree over the other methods said, was that graduate business education was very important for an individual contracting officer's "confidence level." A masters degree in business was seen as an equalizer in the sometimes lopsided environment of government - contractor relations. Confronted with "the best and the brightest" that civilian contractors often assemble to do battle on their part, a masters in business was seen as a way to level the playing field, though one officer claimed that "you can never win with these guys, they're too smart. It's just a matter of minimizing how much you lose."

Of the sixty-seven percent of officers who said that a Masters

Degree was not the best way to become proficient in contracting skills, most later stated that it certainly "couldn't hurt" and that it was a must for promotion competitiveness, especially since the passage of The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act.

c. TRAINING WITH INDUSTRY PROGRAM

The FA 97 Training-With-Industry program takes selected procurement officers and places them for ten months with either private industry, the Defense Contract Audit Agency, or the Defense Logistics Agency. The goals of the program as outlined in the FA 97 TWI 1991-1992 Student Handbook are to:

- Learn how private industry conducts business and then utilize this information to the Army's advantage upon return.
- Obtain training in industrial procedures and practices which is not available through the military service school system.
- Provide a nucleus of officers trained in higher level managerial techniques.
- Enhance the capability of officers to perform Army special program activities.
- Serve as a source of information concerning innovations in industrial management practices and/or techniques. [Ref.39,pg 3]

The remaining thirteen percent of the interviewees placed the Training With Industry (TWI) program at the top of the most critical list. All of the officers in this thirteen percent had been selected for TWI participation at one time or another during their careers and all expressed to this researcher very positive feelings about their TWI experiences. The overall opinion was that

there was no substitute for learning how "the other half lives," as one officer said, adding that " a contractor thinks about profit in terms of Return on Assets/Equity...that's altogether different than the way we (the Government) see it. TWI is the best way to get a handle on that way of thinking."

Discussion of the Training With Industry program evoked strong responses from the entire group of officer's interviewed, whether they had participated in it or not. The range of opinion went from those who considered it a "gift" or "good deal" for officers who happened to be at the right place in their careers when TWI positions were available and merely "frosting on the cake," to those who stated it was the best of all the formal programs in the Army's educational inventory. The majority of the total number of officers interviewed, eighty-seven percent, stated that the TWI program offered an excellent opportunity to gain the "contractor's perspective" on the business of defense acquisition. One officer with particularly strong feelings stated that;

From all that I saw while at TWI...it does not pay to do business with the U.S. Government....It's almost as if the Government is trying to put its defense contractors out of business. When we're (the Government) wrong, we might apologize, eventually. But if the contractor is wrong, we slam him hard and we do it immediately.

One senior officer, the deputy chief of a procurement directorate at a major buying command, said that there was no substitute for the type and breadth of experience gained from the TWI program. He stated further that all of the positions for captains and majors in his directorate were "coded for TWI graduates" and that he actively sought out officers who had come

from TWI.

Another, less senior officer had this to say about his TWI experience;

It all boils down to knowing your adversary and the political games he plays. Most of the time he (the contractor) knows how much money you've got in your budget for whatever it is you're buying before you even sit down to negotiate. He knows this because some (Congressional) staffer from his home state told him. ...and that's the figure he's going to use, regardless of what a fair and reasonable price is. TWI can help you get inside his decision cycle...you may not win but at least you know how he's thinking.

Of the twenty percent of officers who had participated in the TWI program, over half expressed a need for experience at a buying command before participating in TWI. All of these officers were careful to not denigrate their TWI experience, but they were insistent that TWI would have been enhanced if they had some buying experience before participating. The general feeling was summed up by this comment from a TWI participant; "I had no contracting knowledge base to draw on since TWI was my first assignment as a 97... I should have gotten some experience as a buyer first and then gone to TWI."

4. ARE COMPUTER SKILLS CRITICAL ?

Fifty percent of the interviewees responded that computer skills were not critical. The preponderance of feeling was that computer skills were certainly "helpful" but that a lack of such would not be crippling. Opined one officer serving as a the chief of a buying team at an AMC major subordinate command;

Computers aren't necessary at the buyer's level. There's

usually a civilian on your team that knows his way around a computer. We've got too many computers anyway. We issue them before we really know what it is we want to do with them.

Forty-two percent stated that indeed, computer skills were absolutely critical. Furthermore, these officers elaborated by defining exactly what they meant by computer skills. A contracting officer would certainly be less than efficient they said, if he did not, or could not, keep his own database on either Lotus 123 or DBASE IV; if he was unfamiliar with the techniques of spreadsheet generation and analysis; if he was unfamiliar with the latest version of WordPerfect; and if he could not employ the computer, himself, to do such tasks as the generation of weighted guidelines, the running of regression analysis models, the researching of clauses in the Federal Acquisition Regulation and creation of business clearance memoranda. The prevailing opinion amongst these officers was that the contracting arena, along with business in general, is becoming more and more automated; for an FA 97 officer to deny this reality and fail to equip himself to deal with it would be a mistake of career limiting proportion. A senior officer remarked that;

We're slaves to the computer in these types (buying commands) of organizations. Your progress and your evaluation are measured by computer reports...if they're not accurate its your fault. I don't want to hear that some report is messed up because the one guy who could use a computer was sick that day...everyone better know how to make the computer work for them.

Only eight percent of the interviewees stated that computer skills had not been important in their FA 97 assignments thus far, and that they did not foresee them becoming so. Both officers

asserted that computer skills belonged to the "technicians" and that as senior officers their's was the realm of "planning," not "pecking at a keyboard."

5. IS A KNOWLEDGE OF REGULATIONS CRITICAL ?

All twenty-four of the officers interviewed responded to this question with the answer that a "thorough understanding" of the regulations is absolutely critical. Not one of them intimated in any way that the ability "to quote chapter and verse" would be anything but counterproductive, as one officer said "its too easy to misquote the FAR... to quote only bits and pieces... and usually completely out of the context of what you're quoting really means."

The overwhelming opinion was that a "thorough familiarity" means "knowing exactly where to look." Explained one interviewee;

...if you're quoting regulations to me, I'm not going to trust you completely. What I'm looking for is the ability, when confronted with a contracting situation, to recognize that certain statutory or regulatory provisions apply, know where to find them, and then use them the way they were intended to be used...a contracting officer should be able to focus contract problems in terms of FAR elements.

Forty percent of the interviewees stated that regulatory provisions dealing with contract changes and modifications were perhaps the most important of all. When pressed for a definition of "regulatory provisions," the following were presented: Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), Department of Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS), Armed Services Pricing Manual (ASPM), guidance from the office of Eleanor Spector, Army FAR Supplement (AFARS), and any supplements issued by the major

subordinate command.

One senior officer expressed the opinion that it was bordering on "impracticability of performance" for a contracting officer to know everything about all of the rules and regulations governing procurement. But it certainly was not impossible, he went on to say, for a contracting officer to be aware of all the provisions in the FAR and his Service's regulations that affected whatever type of procurement he happened to be doing. An officer doing small purchases "should be an expert in small purchase (regulatory) provisions... one working on a major system should be the same in his area..." Another senior officer expressed it thusly; "...its like being a lawyer...most lawyers don't quote case law off of the tops of their heads, but they sure have the references and they damn sure know where to look..."

6. ARE NEGOTIATION SKILLS CRITICAL ?

Seventy-one percent responded that the ability to negotiate was critical to effectiveness as a contracting officer. Said one senior officer; "If you can't negotiate; you can't be a contracting officer...you're effectively dead in the water." Said another in a more forceful manner, "the desire to exercise power over others is one trait of a successful manager...negotiating skills are one way to employ this power..." This same interviewee continued that; "...at the 0-3/0-4 level you have got to be your own expert or you don't have any credibility. If you're not the expert then you end up depending on other people and they end up being the expert, not

you."

All of the officers who had participated in the TWI program (twenty percent) responded that negotiating skill was critical. Each one of them also emphasized that they felt they were better negotiators because of their TWI experience. Said one buying team chief about the value of his TWI experience in giving him an edge in negotiations; "...my basic understanding of the problems that contractors face and the kinds of tricks they play to win contracts has been invaluable when it comes to sitting down across the table from them now."

When asked to express what "negotiating skills" meant, these officers invariably stated that negotiations was "ninety percent preparation and ten percent talk." All of them emphasized that all of the business skills discussed by this researcher were critical in developing the ability to negotiate. It was a rare individual, they said, who could bluff his way through without really knowing what he was talking about.

Twenty-one percent responded that the ability to negotiate was not particularly critical. It certainly would not hurt, went the general line of reasoning, to be able to negotiate, but the lack of such skill was not especially detrimental. Two officers, both part of this percentage group and both from the same command, stated that they felt that negotiations were largely personality driven, i.e.; "...(you) don't train specifically for these skills. Some people just read other people better." One officer summarized the attitude of this body of opinion when he said that he knew he was

a weak negotiator but that this weakness did not concern him, as even in situations where he was the "chief negotiator" because he "always had someone else do the talking for me."

Eight percent of the interviewees declined to express an opinion, citing lack of experience.

7. WHAT TYPES OF MANAGERIAL SKILLS ARE CRITICAL ?

a. WRITING AND BRIEFING SKILLS.

All of the officers interviewed expressed the opinion that writing skills were critical to success in the FA 97 arena.

Only eight percent stated that they thought that briefing skills were important.

The prevailing attitude concerning the necessity for a contracting officer to be able to express himself in a concise and unambiguous manner was summarized in this manner; " (Writing skills)...are standard issue in an officer's bag of tricks. All officers for that matter, but especially FA 97 officers, should be able to speak and write the Leavenworth English."

Twelve percent of this group, all senior officers, specifically mentioned the effectiveness of the Combined Arms And Services Staff School (CAS3) at Ft Leavenworth, Kansas. These officers said it was obvious to them which of their subordinates had been to CAS3 and which had not.

The most frequently cited justifications for the criticality of being able to communicate effectively with both the written and spoken word, other than the fact that it is a skill that every

citizen ought to possess, (though that has long since ceased as being taken for granted), are listed here in no particular order:

Writing contract documentation memoranda

Writing Justification & Approval documents

Formal written correspondence with contractors

Writing briefing papers on contract status for superiors

b. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT.

One hundred percent of the respondents stated that yes, of course, leadership skills are important in any type of job with supervisory responsibility, and doubly so in most military jobs by their very nature and that FA 97 assignments were no exception.

Sixty-three percent however, distinguished between the "leadership skills" of the type exercised in a troop environment and the "management skills" they felt they employed working in an overwhelmingly civilian environment. They were quick to point out that "things are managed but people are led." The remaining thirty-seven percent said that there was little distinction between leadership and management; that it was just a "matter of semantics." One interviewee remarked that by the time an officer makes it to an FA 97 assignment, considering all of the time-in-service, and educational and other requirements, they had undoubtedly already proven themselves adept at leadership/management and that this issue should be a moot one. Officers who had somehow made it to this point without the requisite leadership ability and/or management skill were

exceptions to the rule and had "slipped through the cracks.. but the (officer evaluation) system would eventually catch up with them."

Fully one third of the interviewees said that they did not have a difficult time making the transition from a troop environment to the administrative one of a FA 97 assignment, but that their perception was that combat arms officers had a very difficult time. These officers, because of the lack of women in their basic branches and the dearth of opportunities for gaining experience working with civilians, were subjected to a more severe "culture shock than their noncombat arms brethren." The interviewees who were combat arms officers though, stated that they did not encounter any more than the usual amount of difficulty in going from one duty assignment to another. In fact, one combat arms officer with ten years troop experience, and not a day of it with women or civilians, said that the management and leadership skills he used in his FA 97 assignments were "...basically the same .." as in his troop assignments, just that he had to "...be more polite when dealing with civilians."

Thirty-eight percent responded that there was a definite "lack of a sense of urgency amongst the civilian workforce in general." A few officers attributed the perceived difficulty in making the transition to the contracting environment to this lack of urgency. One officer illustrated his point by saying that "I was used to going one hundred miles-an-hour when I was in a unit, but here we're restricted to the federally imposed fifty-five mile-an hour

limit."

The thirty-seven percent of respondents who made no distinction between leadership and management expressed the overall opinion that it was simply "a matter of getting people to do what you want them to do," that different people are motivated in different ways and that, "just like they teach in all of the basic (branch) courses," management/leadership is a matter of recognizing this and applying the "correct style of leadership."

One major buying command has recognized this initial transition period as a potential problem, as one officer told this researcher that he was scheduled to attend a week-long course in how to manage civilians. The purpose of the course he said, was to inform him about the different personnel rules that govern the civilian workforce. He added that the two he was most concerned about were the ones he thought would be most different from a troop unit, that is, overtime, compensatory time and grievance procedures.

One senior officer, with a past tour as the commander of a major contracting agency, said that the age-old military adage "Mission first, men always," served him well no matter who he was leading/managing. He continued that your workforce is "your men," regardless of its make up; the mission is always there to be accomplished, "you just have to approach it in a different way."

8. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF THE ARMY ACQUISITION CORPS ?

Sixty-three percent of the interviewees are not currently

members of the acquisition corps. The predominant feeling expressed to this researcher was that the acquisition corps "is the domain of the 51's," (FA 51, Research and Development) and that "there is nothing in it for the 97's." Amongst the officers who are not members of the corps, and even some who are, there is widespread uncertainty about the future career ramifications of becoming a member. Two senior officers, both the military deputy chief of the procurement directorate at their respective command's, said that they were confused about whether the acquisition corps would force FA 97's into "the PM side of the house." One had this to say about the AAC, "There are too many misconceptions floating around...there's not enough information out there (about the AAC) for my guys (junior officers) to make intelligent decisions about whether they want to be members or not." He went on to say that, "I think 97's are afraid to join because we're afraid of being locked into PM slots...is the acquisition corps going to let me be a 97 or force me into the program side of the house ?" Another senior officer stated his feeling in this manner; "The acquisition corps is not going to work...it's going to be a billpayer for the drawdown...the acquisition corps is for civilians, not officers." A major in an AMC MSC summarized the general feeling when he said;

...51's are in charge, they're running the show and they think that they are the only ones qualified to be in the AAC...So we're members (the 97's) but we're not players...I'm frustrated, (as a 97 in the AAC), because I don't see a future out there. Need evidence ? Just look at the last two PM lists.

For the thirty-seven percent of the officers who are members of the acquisition corps, their attitude was captured by the

interviewee who said;

The Army Acquisition Corps is a good concept, it makes a lot of sense when you look at it...but the Army has a poor track record of protecting people who join a program such as the AAC when in later months the program is no longer important and there is suddenly this group of officers with this skill that is no longer needed.

C. SUMMARY

The background data on the officers interviewed and their responses to the questions were presented in this chapter. The proceeding chapter will provide some insight as to why some of the interviewees answered the way they did and why the prevailing attitudes and opinions may exist. Additionally, the reasons for the appearance of a number of the technical skills that were mentioned, as well as those that were not, will be examined.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the underlying reasons for the answers this researcher received in response to the research questions posed and to examine the significance of the opinions expressed in this study for the Army's system of educating and training its Functional Area 97 officers.

The most critical technical skills will be explored first, followed by the most critical managerial skills. Next will be a discussion of the most expedient method of transferring this base of technical and managerial skills to FA 97 officers. Finally, a brief exposition of the ecumenical opinion of FA 97 officers in the field on the import of the Army Acquisition Corps will be presented.

B. MOST CRITICAL TECHNICAL SKILLS

1. Knowledge of the Regulations

There was no doubt as to the criticality of the skill of being able to navigate successfully over all of the regulatory rocks and statutory shoals that the myriad of laws and regulations present to a contracting officer; all of the interviewees responded that this was indeed so. What this researcher was able to garner though, was that the field of contracting and its corresponding

statutory guidelines is immense to the point that an FA 97 officer can only hope to be an expert in the particular field of contracting that he is presently working in. This field of expertise is commensurate with the officer's length of service and experience in contracting. The most efficient way to learn the regulations is to deal with them as they apply to the specific type of contracting being done. As experience is gained, along with greater responsibility and breadth of assignments, so to is confidence and knowledge of the laws that govern every aspect of what FA 97 officers do.

There was a recognizable correlation to this researcher between those officers who professed to be computer literate and those who claimed more than a passing familiarity with the FAR. This can be attributed to the software versions of the FAR that make its provisions instantly accessible and easily employed by those who have the skill to use it. The use of computers and the criticality of computer literacy will be discussed in a later part of this section on critical technical skills.

2. General Business Sense

It is not surprising to this researcher that eighty percent of the respondents stated that "a good business sense" is the most critical skill required of an FA 97 officer. The difficulty lies in the refinement of what exactly the phrase "good business sense" encompasses. It became apparent that the phrase held different shades of meaning for different officers. Some officers emphasized

the technical side of business skill, e.g. accounting, while others emphasized the managerial aspect, e.g. "people skills."

There can be little doubt that the educational background and assignment history of each officer interviewed played a large role in shaping the attitude of the answers and opinions he provided. Those officers who held masters degrees tended to emphasize the criticality of such in addition to the technical skills of the sort derived from a formal school environment. Those officers who did not have masters degrees though, tended to downplay their importance to the point of implying, or so this researcher thought, that they were not really necessary; "nice to have," of course, but certainly not "necessary."

Thus, the close proximity of the percentage of those officers with masters degrees, seventy-five percent, and the percentage of officers who felt that a good business sense was the most critical skill, eighty percent; a difference of only two officers.

3. Specialized Accounting Skill

The eighteen percent of interviewees who insisted that specialized accounting skills were critical all came from backgrounds of specialized accounting knowledge and application themselves. All professed an extra interest in the various fields of accounting and all had expended no small amount of personal effort in increasing their accounting skills above that level which was average for their peers. All of these officers had advanced

degrees in business administration and all but one were serving in positions of senior supervisory responsibility.

Based on the number of years of combined experience in all facets of the FA 97 career field and the authority with which these officers speak, derived from the positions they presently hold, their feelings about "advanced" accounting skill, beyond that which is implied by the phrase "general business skill," contain merit.

These officers expressed an opinion which is consistent with those who claim that the contracting officer must be his own expert, for two primary reasons. First, the contracting officer is the one with whom the final decision authority rests, he can seek advice and counsel from others, but must rely on his own expertise since it is his own decision. Secondly, a long held maxim of military leadership is that to lead effectively, an officer must not only be able to do everything required of his subordinates, but that he must also be able to do it better. Thus an FA 97 officer, who can anticipate various supervisory responsibilities, from chief of a buying team to head of a contracting agency, must be the master of those skills his subordinates are required to have. Foremost among these are accounting and accounting related skills.

When asked, all of the other interviewees stated that advanced accounting skill, qualification as a Certified Professional Accountant for example, would contribute in great degree to job performance and effectiveness. Not one however, beyond the eighteen percent discussed above, thought that this skill was feasible to obtain, given career path time constraints,

or described it as even "highly desirable."

4. No Particular Skill

It was surprising to this researcher that two officers answered that no skill in particular was especially critical for FA 97 officers. There are probably few functional areas in the Army that require the breadth and diversity of abilities as does FA 97. Perhaps because of their relatively junior status in the contracting field, these two officers have not yet had the number of different assignments necessary for the formation of a strong opinion. Possibly, both officers could have felt overwhelmed by the incredible demand made on their abilities daily, and felt that everything is important to such a degree that no one single skill could be identified.

5. Communications Skill

The eight percent of officers answering in this regard are very senior with a multitude of command and supervisory assignments in their careers thus far. Both officers have extensive negotiating experience and one has a significant amount of time in high-level, policy making positions. It is reasonable that a contracting officer with a preponderance of supervisory assignments and policy making experience would emphasize the criticality of communications skill. Communications skill might too, particularly in the command and policy making environments, encompass the political ramifications of dealing with all of the disparate

players in a command or headquarters organization while trying to forge consensus to facilitate mission accomplishment.

6. Contract Law

Although only four percent of the interviewees responded that they thought contract law was the most critical knowledge factor in an FA 97 officer's skill base, the majority of respondents did mention, at some time during the course of their interview, that a thorough familiarity with contract law and the applicable regulatory guidelines were among the most critical of the technical aspects of the overall skill base of a contracting officer.

This researcher detected an undercurrent of distrust of civilian contractors in the opinions expressed by the interviewees in that there was a heavy emphasis on the provisions in the Federal Acquisition Regulation and other regulations that dealt with protests and contract termination procedures. The general attitude was one characterized by the sense that, given the chance, most civilian contractors will protest an award merely to be spiteful, regardless of whether or not they may have a legitimate complaint. More insidious though, is the trap that awaits an unprepared and unarmed contracting officer in the guise of a termination. Whether it is for default or one for the convenience of the Government, a termination improperly handled can "ruin" a contracting officer. Although only a few interviewees professed any direct involvement with termination actions, the majority expressed a general feeling

of foreboding at the possibility of having to deal with them.

When pressed for specifics, most of the interviewees could only provide sketchy generalities of termination actions they had heard of from fellow contracting officers. This leads this researcher to believe that these amorphous, yet forceful, expressions of the greed of civilian contractors is another manifestation of the "adversarial relationship" between the Government and its contract suppliers. The phrase most often used, indeed so much so that it is now a cliche in contracting circles, to describe those parts of the FAR and other regulations which are most important to contracting officers, is "tell me what I need to know about them to stay out of jail." It follows then, that with an attitude that in its most favorable light can be described as "adversarial," contracting officers would be most interested in the provisions of the regulations describing penalties for contracting transgressions. Yet, not a single officer interviewed by this researcher could name an associate who had ever run afoul of any of the regulations and/or statutory provisions to the point of being charged, convicted and incarcerated.

It is this researcher's observation that there are two main influences on the opinions of FA 97 officers: (1) officials in the formal school environment and, (2) peers and supervisors of contracting officers. More than one interviewee stated that the "schoolhouse did a good job of teaching the regulations," and that as part of that process, emphasized the provisions which spell out what is prohibited, forbidden, not allowed, illegal, unethical,

etc. Combine this educational experience with the institutional opinion of the contracting profession, which is historically one of mistrust of the contractor, reinforce it with a barrage of headlines and investigations of procurement fraud and contractor greed, and it is not surprising that so many officers feel the way they do about knowing the regulations.

Although only four percent stated that acquiring expertise in contract law was the most critical skill, seventy-one percent mentioned at some time during the course of their interview that "Understanding contract law," was a skill contributing to the development of a sound business background. This is understandable in the context of the fact that fifty percent mentioned the need to be equipped to deal with contract protests and terminations. This researcher observed however, that few of the interviewees had any direct experience with contract disputes actions. The overall impression gained from the context of the interviews was that for those officers expressing the need for expertise in the area of "legal proprieties," the reason for such was the impression gained by the officer from his predecessors and passed on to him by his contemporaries.

7. Empirical Skills

Empirical skills are those skills which require a working familiarity with the fundamentals of algebra and calculus and a basic knowledge of statistical theory. Included in this category of skills are tasks such as constructing a learning curve,

performing basic regression analysis, and conducting an analysis of a contractor's proposal based on predetermined criteria.

This researcher is surprised by the low frequency of mention of the skills that pertain directly to financial and cost accounting skills and general empirical ability. For example, only seventeen percent mentioned "Understanding Cost Accounting Standards," and only four percent mentioned "Understand a contractor's disclosure statement." It is the opinion of this researcher that the low frequency of mention of specific empirically related skills is directly attributable to the fact that only eighteen percent of the interviewees stated that any specialized accounting expertise was necessary. This same eighteen percent accounts for the identification of the majority of the specific skills that were named by four or less interviewees.

If eighty percent of the interviewees stated that a "strong business background" was critical to success as an FA 97, why did only eighteen percent insist on in-depth accounting expertise, a heavily empirically oriented skill? This researcher believes that each officer's own definition of the phrase "a good business sense" determines, in large part, his opinion of the best way to acquire it and of what comprises it. The very senior officers with experience in program offices and in command positions tended to stress the need for advanced skill. The junior level officers with limited FA 97 experience, i.e. in their first assignment as an FA 97, and working in organizations comprised primarily of civilian contract series personnel (GS 1102), tended to downplay the

technical aspects and skills of contracting and emphasize the managerial and leadership skills. This can be attributed to the limited scope of their experiences thus far and the necessarily narrow horizons of a contract specialist. As was expressed to this researcher, the presence of qualified civilians, expert in such skills as cost analysis and assembling solicitation documents, tends to downplay the need for the FA 97 officer himself to be expert in these particular skills.

It should still come as no surprise though, that of the skills requiring empirical ability, accounting was the field most heavily emphasized by the FA 97 officers who participated in this study. This validates what is inherently obvious in that the ability to understand a contractor's cost collection and assignment system along with the ability to decipher balance sheets and statements of cash flow to gain a picture of the contractor's financial health, is fundamental to dealing with him as either a procuring contracting officer or as an administrative contracting officer. The more skilled a contracting officer may be in financial and cost accounting, the better armed he is to make an initial judgement of a contractor's financial health, evaluate any proposals received and then make a determination for award followed by successful administration of the resulting contract.

This researcher believes that a principal reason for the lack of very strong emphasis on empirical skills in general and specialized accounting skills in particular, is the widespread lack of such skills in the overall officer population. The majority of

junior officers are not required to perform duties at the Lieutenant and Captain level in their basic branches that require any great degree of analytical mathematical ability. It follows then, that when an FA 97 is fortunate enough to be selected for advanced civil schooling (ACS), the rigors of the empirically oriented graduate program of study make a lasting impression and may cause him to change his opinion about what he considers critical. This phenomenon is perhaps equally true for the officer who may go straight to a buying command in an initial FA 97 assignment and is there exposed to the intensely empirically oriented contracting environment. This depends in large measure however, on the presence of civilian staff "experts" who may perform the majority of the very technical work.

For the twenty percent of officers who did not assert that empirical skills were the most critical, perhaps they did so out of being put off by the need to acquire an alien and demanding, yet undeniably essential, skill base while tenuously relying on the skills of others to avoid facing their own shortcomings.

8. Computer Skills

Except for one senior officer, the feeling about the criticality of computer skill broke down almost exactly by the age of the interviewee, i.e. the older the officer, the less emphasis he placed on computer skills; the younger the officer, the more he felt that computer skills were necessary. This is perhaps a common phenomenon in the business world in general. The older workers,

ones of a previous generation, either resist new and intimidating technologies outright or only grudgingly accept them, often times not making full use of their applicability. The more youthful workers however, who have been exposed to new technologies at an earlier age, are much more receptive to their use in the workplace because they are not intimidated by what they view as an indispensable aid.

A few officers, running the gamut of the rank structure, recognized early on that computer technology was going to become more and more prevalent in the contracting workplace and have developed computer skills that far exceed the basic familiarity that most others have. These few are a definite minority and are likely to remain so as their desire to acquire advanced computer skills is fueled as much by personal interest as it is by professional requirements.

The need for a basic level of computer literacy came across very strongly regardless of generational motivational differences. What also came across to this researcher was the need to adopt a standard set of computer software throughout all of the Army Material Command. A standard wordprocessing program, database and spreadsheet manager, and graphics program would improve communications and efficiency not only throughout AMC, but within major subordinate commands as well. In some instances two offices that share a common wall may not have any computer interchangability as both are using different software.

The Army and its corps of acquisition professionals can anticipate a corresponding increase in the numbers of computer skilled officers as those entering the service at this point have probably been working with computers in some form or another since grade school. This increase in the pool of knowledgeable and enthusiastic users will speed the automation that is sweeping all aspects of the business world, Government contracting certainly not notwithstanding. This in turn will see computer skills transition from a "highly desirable" category to a "highly critical" one as the older workforce retires and is gradually replaced by successive generations of computer literate officers until such time as the entire workforce depends on the computer to conduct most of the business of contracting.

One prescient senior officer remarked that the day was not far off when the entire process of solicitation, evaluation of bids, and awarding of contracts would all be accomplished by computer and the sometime burdensome and onerous task of contract modification would be accomplished with a few keystrokes at a computer keyboard. This all foretells the day when, if in fact they are not already so, computer skills will be a basic prerequisite to being able to perform in functional area 97.

C. MOST CRITICAL MANAGERIAL SKILL

1. Leadership and Management

There was universal acclaim that both leadership and managerial skills are absolutely critical to success in the

contracting and industrial management career field. Most officers, perhaps because of the intensely personal nature that develops between an officer and his soldiers, chose to make a distinction between the personal nature of what they defined as leadership, i.e. "people skills," and the distant and impersonal arena of management, i.e. "resource skills." This researcher found the distinction between leadership and management largely irrelevant in the realm of Functional Area 97 because successful performance as conveyed by the opinions of the interviewees requires equal measures of both.

Among officers of the combat arms branches, e.g. Infantry, Armor, etc., the term "manager" can take on insulting overtones as it is often applied to staff officers who handle paper and not soldiers. "Leadership," on the other hand, instantly brings to mind images of great military heros from wars past and the promise of fame and conquests to come. It is illuminating that military heros are commonly described as great leaders, not great managers, though it is apparent that Grant, Pershing, Eisenhower, and Schwarzkopf were all as equally endowed with managerial abilities as they were with leadership ones.

The popular misconception that leadership and management skills mix like oil and water aside, it is apparent that considerable amounts of skill in "leading" an amalgamation of civil servants towards the accomplishment of a common goal while concurrently "managing" the resources available, time and funding among them, are critical to the success of any FA 97. One such

skill can not be employed with out the other. This is not to brook argument with those who would say that "battlefield leadership" is an art unto itself, separate and distinct from management; in the context considered in this thesis, leadership and a management are mutually interdependent.

The discriminatory appeal of "military leadership" and its association with the uniquely male warrior tradition does well to explain the difficulties expressed by combat arms officers in making the transition from the aggressively male environment of a line unit to the more genteel and integrated environment of the procurement world. In this instance there are two distinct cultures coming into direct opposition. The attitude engendered by the mission of the combat arms branches to "close with and destroy the enemy" is not directly transferable, applicable, or desirable to the administrative atmosphere of the major buying commands. The contractor, though some would claim he is indeed the enemy, is one to be cooperated with, not destroyed. It is little wonder then, that some officers do not initially meet with success when they try to run their buying teams as if they were tactical units and treat their GS-4s as if they were E-4s.

The officers who came from branches and/or jobs where they had daily interaction with women and civilians expressed no great frustration in making the transition from troop unit to contracting office. Those officers without the benefits of this exposure did.

The "sense of urgency" and devotion to mission accomplishment that Army officers bring to their work as

contracting officers should be harnessed and channeled into a positive direction. The limitations of a workforce composed of civil servants vice soldiers must be recognized and measures taken to make the most of the talents and inherent benefits of the stability and maturity of a civilian workforce. There did not appear to be any disagreement with the assertion that the core skills of leadership and management, practiced and sharpened through eight years of service, transfer easily and directly to contracting and industrial management; provided allowances are made for what is a fundamentally different work environment.

It should also be mentioned that this researcher observed an attitude which suggested that because military officers as a rule are expected to "master" such an incredibly wide-ranging and diverse set of skills throughout the course of their careers, they actually become "expert" in only the managerial and leadership skills and rely on the civilian experts for advice concerning the technical skills.

Military officers are by their very nature "generalists," who are required to apply a set of commonly accepted management techniques and leadership principles to an unending parade of situations in an equally limitless set of disciplines and circumstances. The constant factor holding this unwieldy equation together is the soundness of these immutable principles of leadership and techniques of management that are, after all, immutable because of their universal applicability. Therein lies the foundation for the commonly held opinion expressed to this

researcher; that any military officer with the requisite leadership and management skills (which have certainly been honed to a fine edge after eight years of service) can step into almost any contracting situation, with little introduction, and immediately begin managing the civilian experts who practice one set of very limited skills for their entire careers.

If this is indeed true, then there is no need for graduate education for FA 97 officers, no need for the Training With Industry Program and no need for the courses offered by the Acquisition Enhancement Program Office (ACE). This researcher believes that this not the case and that the passage of DAWIA and the opinions of the more senior and experienced officers interviewed herald the recognition of the requirement to professionalize the military acquisition workforce. There may be some functional areas which require no experts, merely generalists of the ilk discussed above. Functional Area 97 is not only not one of them, but is a functional area which requires its officer members to be their own experts.

2. The Ability to Negotiate

Although seventy-one percent of the interviewees stated that they considered negotiation skills to be critical, less than half of them had any actual experience at the negotiating table. That the majority came down on the side of criticality can be attributed to a perception that this researcher observed; that negotiations are a higher form of the verbal art and a necessary

part of "closing the deal" in the civilian business community, regardless of how many officers are ever faced with formal negotiations with a contractor. Army officers necessarily practice the art of persuasion in the discharge of their daily duties, whether in a more open and forthright manner as might be witnessed in a troop environment or the more subtle, though not necessarily more gentle, manner necessary in a major buying command. Because of what Army officers are conditioned to accept as the norm then, and the popular conception of business consisting of "closing the deal," the interviewees would tend to see negotiations as critical, regardless of whether or not they had any actual experience negotiating.

3. Writing and Briefing Skills

The majority of interviewees did not feel that the ability to give a polished, formal, military style briefing was critical. Formal briefings were rare occurrences in the experience of the officers this researcher spoke to. If information had to be passed along it was done so in an informal manner either in a memo or in person through a "desk side" briefing. Only one officer said he had made extensive use of briefing skills and that was due to what he claimed was a combination of a natural proclivity on his part and the information requirements Operation Desert Storm placed on his contracting directorate.

The ability to express thoughts in a logical and concise manner on paper was universally identified as an absolutely

critical skill.

The Army has long recognized a serious shortfall in the ability of its officers to write clearly and has attempted to correct this potentially crippling defect by instituting reforms in the way it trains its junior and midgrade officers. New lieutenants are faced with English grammar and composition courses during their accession branch basic courses and captains are subjected to the same when they attend their advanced course at approximately four years time in service. The most comprehensive part of the effort to improve writing skills is the Combined Arms And Services Staff School (CAS3) which all captains must attend at some point before their eighth year of service. The focus of CAS3 is on developing the skills that officers of all branches will need in later assignments to staff positions; chief among these are briefing and writing.

This researcher received nothing but enthusiastic responses concerning the positive effects that CAS3 was having through the improved skills of its graduates. A number of senior officers mentioned that they had experienced personal embarrassment at times when one of their FA 97 officers was not able to make himself understood to a contractor because of the use of the stilted and passive language that up until only recently characterized the Army's writing style. Fortunately, because of the remedial measures discussed above, the Army is making progress in what was an area of great weakness.

4. Ethics

This area was notable for an almost complete lack of mention. Only one officer out of twenty-four said anything at all about the ethical dimension of contracting and the pitfalls and obstacles endemic to it.

An attitude similar to that discovered about certain other skills is equally apparent concerning integrity. The military profession inculcates its members with its unique ethical perspective from the very moment a new officer takes his oath. A military officer's word is his bond and nothing further need be said. What might appear as a glaring omission to the uninitiated is not that at all. It is the silent assent to a commonly held set of beliefs and shared values; an officer's integrity is not so much taken for granted as it is assumed to be a prerequisite of membership in the organization.

Unfortunately, a Disneyesque simplification of battlefield honor does not apply in whole or in part to the sometimes gordian complexity of the statutes that govern the actions of contracting and industrial management officers. Special attention must be paid to the ethical considerations of Government contracting as there are few, if any, direct comparisons with the less hazy distinctions between right and wrong in the field Army. An FA 97 officer can not rely on intuition alone as what may "feel" right is not necessarily either legal or advisable.

D. BEST WAY TO DEVELOP/OBTAIN SKILLS

1. On-The Job-Training

The majority of interviewees, fifty-four percent, responded that OJT was the most efficient way to learn the skills necessary to function in an entry level position, e.g. contract specialist. This opinion aligns with the preceding discussion in that it is commonly held that military officers can pick up by "osmosis" the skills they need while actually working in the position assigned. Some senior officers even said that because of the ability to "focus" on only those skills the officer needs to function on a day-to-day basis, on-the-job training was the method of choice for preparing the military officers for the eventual receipt of a warrant.

It is also understandable that OJT should be the preferred method from the perspective of the often understaffed and overburdened contracting organizations. The common ratio of civil servants to military officers in the organizations dealt with in this study was approximately 50:1. Any reluctance on the part of a supervising officer to let a position go unfilled while prospective candidates are at various training programs, when the officer could be filling a position and learning his job at the same time through OJT, is therefore understandable.

The fallacy of the completeness of OJT is well borne out by the experiences of several interviewees as related to this researcher. The experience of one, a combat arms officer, gives credence to the proposition that OJT is only part of the total

education and training of an FA 97 officer. This particular officer made the transition directly from a troop environment, completely unrelated to contracting, to the TWI program and thence to a major buying command where he was in possession of an unlimited warrant within four months of assuming his duties. By his own admission, this officer was in no position to accept a warrant of any amount after only three months of actual work experience, even though he had participated in TWI. It was only the guidance of the career civil servants on his buying team, said this officer, that prevented him from making any major mistakes.

The significance of the fact that fully half of the fifty-four percent of officers who stated that OJT was the training method of choice do not possess masters degrees, is that OJT is indeed the method for training someone to assume a certain set of duties with the least amount of initial investment and the shortest time of return. This is an unfortunate and shortsighted view however, in that it fails to take the future needs of the Army and the career progression of the individual involved into consideration. It merely seeks to obtain immediate, albeit limited, results at the expense of greater investment for correspondingly greater return. Fortunately, this researcher did not encounter a widespread attitude of favoritism of OJT for the sake of real time benefits for the organization of assignment at the expense of the individual and/or the Army.

2. Masters Degree

Although seventy-five percent of the officers involved in this study have masters degrees, only thirty-three percent of them said that graduate school was the best way to obtain the requisite amount of competence needed to perform as an FA 97. Only one respondent drew a distinction between "training" and "education," saying that the former comes from work experience while the latter is often best obtained in the schoolhouse.

There appears to this researcher to be a tendency in the Army as a whole for officers to view time in their careers spent "away from troops" to be less than well spent, particularly when it comes to measuring up to one's peers when competing for promotion or selection for a senior service college. Conversely, there is also the recognition that an advanced degree, if not a de jure requirement for promotion to the rank of O-5 and above, is certainly a defacto one. Many officers pursue graduate degrees on their own time at their own expense, believing that they are satisfying two requirements at one time; accumulating the right type of experience in their specialty as well as making themselves competitive for promotion to O-5. This is not and cannot be the case for officers who hold the FA 97 designation. A masters degree in business is, if not the most critical and fundamental educational experience of a FA 97 officer's development, then certainly it is among the top three. (The remaining two being on-the-job training and participation in the TWI program).

A minority of interviewees, thirty-three percent, claimed

that a graduate level degree in business was critical; the remaining sixty-seven percent acknowledged that it was, at the very least, highly desirable. If only one third of the military acquisition workforce sees a masters as critical, the implementation of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) will convince the other two thirds.

3. The Training With Industry Program

That all of the respondents were universal in their praise of the TWI program is heartening in that officers who participate in the program are apparently benefiting by both the experience they gain, albeit from the "enemy camp," as well as the training they receive in all of the various contracting and general business skills. The military maxim that states that an officer must strive to know his opponent is just as true and relevant at the negotiating table as it is on the battlefield. Not that contractors are the "enemy," but even maintaining an "arms length" relationship requires that each side understand and have appreciation for the motivations and operational culture of the other.

That over half of the officers who have participated in TWI listed it as the best way to obtain an overall set of business skills lends weight to the strength of the program. The remainder of participants qualified their first choices by saying that TWI was one of the best professional experiences of their careers; but it was not a multi-dimensional one. This point is best illustrated

by the officers who were sent directly to TWI as their first FA 97 assignment and experienced no small amount of bewilderment and confusion as they adjusted to the initially alien environment of procurement. These officers were all adamant that an initial assignment to a contracting command would have enabled them to subsequently derive that much more out of their TWI tour, had they the frame of reference first gained from an entry level FA 97 job, e.g. contract specialist.

The TWI program appears to be only a part of the total preparation process for FA 97 officers. Senior officers in high level supervisory positions did tell this researcher however, that they actively sought out officers with TWI experience, and that if given an option, they would chose a TWI graduate over an officer with a graduate degree. Their rationale was that a degree could be obtained during off-duty time, whereas the experiences gained from TWI could not be.

E. THE ARMY ACQUISITION CORPS

With a force reduction of twenty-five percent over the next four years looming ever larger on the horizon, it is understandable that there should exist some anxiety about career progression in the officer corps. The existence of the Acquisition Corps and its effects on its members is largely shrouded in ignorance. The majority of officers interviewed, regardless of rank, were ill informed about the purpose of the AAC and had only a very vague picture of the career path of an AAC officer. The prevailing

opinion is that the Corps was created for and controlled by FA 51 (research and development) officers and that FA 97 officers were included only as an afterthought.

There is precious little accurate information in the field about the Acquisition Corps and what little does exist is outdated or only partly correct. The unstable legislative climate and the continuing drawdown make the situation even more tenuous as most officers said that they thought the Acquisition Corps would be the "billpayer" for the Army Material Command's share of the officer cuts. Among the majority of the officers interviewed, whether they were members of the Acquisition Corps or not, the prevalent feeling was expressed as; why sign up for a program that is at best going to be a career dead end or at worst lead only a very temporary existence until the next "quick fix" program comes along ?

F. SUMMARY

The possible underlying reasons for why the interviewees answered the way they did were explored in this chapter in addition to a brief amount of background material that sheds more understanding on the opinions of the officers who participated in this study.

The next and final chapter will draw on its antecedent ones to provide this researcher's conclusions and recommendations for the skills, assignments, abilities and knowledge factors that should be considered critical for a foundation of Functional Area 97 skills.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions were arrived at as a result of this study. They are divided into four sections; Section 1: technical skills; Section 2: training, education, and experience; Section 3: managerial skills; Section 4; the Army Acquisition Corps.

1. Technical Skills

- a. The development of "a general business sense" is the most critical of all of the skills and abilities needed for an officer to perform in the Contracting and Industrial Management Functional Area.

The phrase, "a general business sense" is inherently problematic because it invokes strong, but different, images for different people. In this study, the common meaning of this phrase encompassed the types of skills and enabling abilities that one would obtain through a rigorous graduate program in business administration or management. An FA 97 officer with a "good business sense" is able to make the wisest business decision for the Government; the concerns of cost effectiveness, best value and meeting the needs of the end user should be foremost in his mind. He distills the inputs from the customer and the various supporting staffs available at the contracting organization, e.g. lawyers, cost analysts, engineers, contract specialists, etc., and from their sometimes widely divergent advice, finds the common ground

and chooses the course of action that provides the best product at the best price to Government while simultaneously satisfying any congressionally mandated provisions of social policy.

More importantly however, the FA 97 officer with a sound business sense is able to choose the wisest course of action in the absence of any supporting staff. The FA 97 officer so equipped is able to act as his own expert in the above named areas, and after having gathered the necessary data, make a decision that meets the needs of the purpose of the procurement action at no cost of undue influence from any of the contributing factors.

- b. *The development of advanced, specialized expertise in financial and cost accounting is highly desirable for all FA 97 officers.*

Though the development of specialized accounting skill beyond that which is obtainable through a normal graduate business administration program is not critical, it is none-the-less the most highly desirable special skill for an FA 97 officer to possess. A basic understanding of financial and cost accounting principles and practices is critical; the achievement of a Certified Public Accountant's certificate is not. The FA 97 officer must understand how the civilian contractor operates; how his pricing mechanisms work, how his overhead rates are calculated, and how his costs are accumulated and accounted for. The FA 97 officer must understand and be able to communicate in accounting terms with the functional experts on the support staff of the major buying commands. Most importantly though, he must be able to act

as his own expert in the absence of any functional experts or supporting staff.

- c. A thorough understanding of contract law and a basic familiarity with all of the governing procurement related regulations and statutory guidelines are critical knowledge factors for the FA 97 officer.

The very nature of Government contracting, in that it is completely different from its civilian counterpart, aside from the unique aspects brought to it from its Defense Department cousin, demands that the professionals who deal with its intricacies be thoroughly versed in its regulatory foundations. FA 97 officers should be familiar with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), its Department of the Army supplement and any additional supplements applicable to the various major subordinate commands.

A "basic familiarity" entails a working knowledge of the contents of the FAR and an immediate intimacy with those sections that apply to the particular area of contracting currently in question. The ability to quote the FAR is not necessary, but the ability to couch contracting situations in terms of the FAR and subsequently reference them so, is critical.

In addition to those aspects of the body of regulatory guidelines that apply to specialized areas of contracting, the FA 97 officer should be thoroughly versed in those aspects that relate to the ethical considerations of Government contracting and standards of professional conduct. The FA 97

officer should also be well versed in the sections of the FAR that deal with cost allowability and contract terminations.

d. Computer literacy is critical for an FA 97 officer to be maximally effective.

The generation of officers in the first wave of accessions into the Acquisition Corps is the first for which computer skills will be critical ones. All that those in procurement functions do is becoming more, not less, automated. Officers who are not computer literate are crippling their effectiveness before they even begin their first FA 97 assignment. At the hands of those who can command it, the computer is more than just another management tool. It is the one tool that can free the contracting officer from the vast of amounts of data that must be analyzed and assimilated, and permit him to concentrate on only those pieces of data which are most important.

Presently, the most critical consideration is not that all of the procurement functions in all of the buying commands are automated, because they are certainly not. The most critical aspect is that those officers who possess the ability to put the computer to work for them are at a marked advantage over their contemporaries who can not.

All FA 97 officers should possess a basic operating knowledge of the MS Disk Operating System (MS DOS) and be versed in these types of software: a wordprocessing program (e.g., Wordperfect); a database management program (e.g., Lotus 123 or DBBase IV); and a graphics program (e.g., Harvard Graphics).

2. Training, Education, and Experience

- a. Training received while working in a Functional Area 97 assignment is the most critical experience factor for an FA 97 officer.

Training received while on the job is the most efficient way to take officers from the various basic branches and give them an immediate grasp of the "how to" of contracting and industrial management. The ability of the immediate supervisor or the officer's mentor in the contracting organization to focus exclusively on those tasks that must be performed to accomplish the mission on a daily basis gives on-the-job training the quickest return for the minimal investment of time and resources.

On-the-job training falls short however, in preparing the FA 97 officer for the assumption of greater responsibility at correspondingly greater levels of skill and ability. OJT does not address the "why" of contracting and industrial management in any coherent or uniform fashion, nor does it present the FA 97 officer with a sound understanding of the entire procurement and acquisition system.

The FA 97 officer should be provided with an initial assignment of short duration in a buying organization. As previously discussed, OJT is sufficient to prepare the Acquisition Corps FA 97 officer to assume limited duties in a short amount of time, preferably as a buyer or a contract specialist on a buying team. The significance of the initial FA 97 assignment being made to a buying command vice the Training With Industry program (TWI) or graduate school, is the institutional reference framework that

this first FA 97 assignment will provide. The reference framework obtained here will significantly enhance the value of graduate education, and later participation in the TWI program, as the officer student/TWI participant will possess a framework against which to evaluate and measure all that is experienced in graduate school and TWI.

- b. The achievement of a masters degree in business administration or management is critical for the continued success and career viability of the FA 97 officer.

A masters degree is not immediately necessary for successful functioning as an FA 97 officer. It is, however, the most expedient means of imparting an understanding of the business environment as a whole to the FA 97 officer along with the fundamental skills in the basic disciplines of business. Most significantly, it is the only vehicle through which FA 97 officers gain an appreciation for the theory, vice the practice, of business skills.

Not only is a masters degree essential for continued competitiveness for promotion to grades of 0-5 and above, it is also a recognized means of developing a facility for critical thinking that prepares the officer for positions of greater responsibility and authority. Additionally, the educational improvement provisions of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) mandate that AAC officers have a masters degree for certification to fill "critical" acquisition positions.

c. Participation in the Training With Industry Program is highly desirable for all FA 97 officers.

There exists no program other than TWI, which gives FA 97 participants a better perspective on Government-industry relations and the dynamics of that relationship in regard to contracting. Unfortunately, TWI slots are limited and, like the fully funded advanced civil schooling program, participating officers are removed from regular duties for the length of the program. However, the return on the investment in time and resources to send an officer to train with industry is an exceptionally large one. The framework of reference that is gained through TWI is extremely valuable in the dividends that it pays through future dealings with civilian contractors in negotiations as well as the invaluable understanding of the operations and mindset of the civilian partner in the contractual relationship.

Functional Area 97 officers should be sent to TWI as positions permit, but only after having served an initial assignment in a major buying command. The TWI program should not serve as an educational vehicle in lieu of the fully funded masters program.

After all FA 97 officers have served their initial FA 97 assignments they should then be sent to obtain a masters degree in business administration. The assumption is that all FA 97 officers at this point are fully qualified for selection for TWI and/or ACS and equally competitive for promotion. Those officers not afforded the opportunity to attend ACS because of timing

problems or other career considerations should progress to TWI, where they should be posted long enough to allow them to obtain a masters degree during their off duty hours. In this manner all FA 97 officers would be cycled through the educational, training and experience programs that will provide them with the critical training, experience and education assignments which they require to become fully functional contracting and industrial management officers.

3. Managerial Skills

a. The ability to negotiate is critical for FA 97 officers.

Although an FA 97 officer can not be assured of involvement in negotiations during an initial FA 97 tour, he can expect that eventually, perhaps as the chief of a buying team, that he will be directly involved in some type of negotiations with contractor personnel.

Some officers might be predisposed because of personality to be better negotiators, but the ability to negotiate is like any other in that it requires much practice to be developed. All FA 97 officers should take advantage of whatever opportunities exist to improve their negotiating skill. The educational experience of a graduate program may provide some background theory on the conduct of negotiations; participation in TWI may present the opportunity to observe actual negotiations from the contractor's perspective; working in an FA 97 position in a major buying command should present the FA 97 officer with the

opportunity to observe and actively participate in negotiations.

The most important part of the development of negotiating skill is the mastery of all of the foundation skills discussed in this thesis, as the preparation before the actual negotiating begins is the most critical phase of the entire process. Once an FA 97 officer has mastered the skills needed to prepare a negotiating position he can then work on honing the actual face-to-face component of the negotiating skill.

Confidence in the art of negotiating can only be developed through the competence achieved by being thoroughly grounded in the basics of contracting and general business principles. Participation in mock negotiations, every bit as brutal as the real thing, is the only sure method to achieve mastery of this critical, yet elusive, skill.

b. The ability to present a formal military style briefing is highly desirable.

The presentation of formal military briefings is not widespread throughout the FA 97 community, therefore it is not absolutely critical that FA 97 officers be able to do so. However, an FA 97 officer who is an accomplished briefer is certainly at an advantage over those of his colleagues who are not. The self-confidence engendered by the ability to successfully present a formal military briefing will carry over into all other aspects of performing the duties of an FA 97 officer.

- c. The ability to express thoughts in writing in a clear and concise manner is critical for functioning as an FA 97 officer.

The ability to write effectively is a critical skill in many job specialties throughout the Army; and it is particularly so for FA 97 assignments. FA 97 officers can expect to deal primarily with people who are not fellow Army officers and who do not understand military jargon. Relations with civilian contractors require formal written correspondence and the FA 97 officer must have the ability to compose such correspondence. He can not rely on a secretary or member of a supporting staff to do his writing for him, as in many instances there are neither secretaries nor staff.

It is already a requirement for all captains from year group 79 and forward to attend the Combined Arms and Services Staff School. Attendance at this highly effective school and completion of a masters program will go far in strengthening the writing abilities of all officers.

- d. All FA 97 officers must be both accomplished leaders and motivators of people and skilled managers of resources.

Because accession into the Acquisition Corps does not take place until after the eighth year of service, most FA 97 officers will have already developed the requisite leadership and management skills through their various assignments in their basic branches. The officer evaluation system will have identified those officers who lack these aforementioned abilities and will have

processed them out of the system before such time as they would seek to be considered for acceptance into the AAC.

4. The Army Acquisition Corps

- a. The Army Acquisition Corps has not been well received by officers in the contracting field.

There is widespread confusion and apprehension concerning the advancement opportunities for FA 97's in the Corps vice those for FA 51's and the possibility for selection as a program manager as well as eligibility for selection for command positions. There exists a general feeling in the field that the AAC will be a career graveyard; offering little advancement opportunity for its members who will languish from an inevitable lack of support once the AAC is superseded by more pressing and timely concerns. FA 97 officers are seen as a necessary burden; caught halfway between being part of the AAC and still remaining loyal to their basic branches.

- b. It is absolutely essential to the viability of the defense procurement function that military officers continue to play a significant role in the business of defense acquisition.

There is no link between the end user in the field and the buyer at the contracting organization more important or more immediately concerned than the uniformed FA 97 officer. To take away the FA 97 officer from procurement would be to remove the "muddy boots" perspective that provides a reality check on the process of acquisition; deny the field Army of its one

representative, who, by his very uniformed presence, serves as a constant reminder of what the real purpose of defense procurement is; purge the procurement environment of its source of empathy for the soldier in the field, empathy that civilian professionals can not provide; and eliminate the origin from which a genuine sense of urgency is communicated to the province of defense acquisition.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Focus the Army Acquisition Corps on the skills most critical for FA 97 success.

The Acquisition Corps must necessarily concentrate its collective efforts on those technical and managerial skills which have been established here as being most critical to performance as an FA 97 officer. The atmosphere of reductions, cutbacks, and drawdowns will not allow for the survival of such a corps of professionals unless they are focused only on what is most important and what has been shown to offer the highest return on the Army's investment of time and money.

2. Establish a transition course to facilitate the integration of basic branch officers into the new environment of their initial FA 97 assignment.

Because of the very unique environment of contracting and industrial management, i.e. the presence of a majority of civilians and the administrative atmosphere, there should be a local course at each of the major subordinate commands of the Army Material Command to transition officers from the line Army into the FA 97 environment.

This transition course should concentrate on the specifics of the civil service system and how to cooperate successfully with a predominantly civilian workforce. It should touch on subjects where there is the greatest diversity between troop units and the buying commands. These areas include: dealing with unions, grievance procedures, termination of civilian employees, overtime, sexual harassment, etc.

3. Integrate all Functional Area 97 Officers into the Army Acquisition Corps.

Functional Area 97 is not a functional area which lends itself to a dual track career path. The technical nature and ever changing defense procurement environment of FA 97 requires that its officers should specialize in it and it alone. If FA 97 officers are to be an important asset to the Acquisition Corps and play a significant role, then they need to be full members and not be left in the fuzzy world of multi-track career possibilities.

4. Allow only certified Acquisition Corps members to compete for procurement command positions.

If the Army Acquisition Corps is to fulfill its mandate to provide the nation with its cadre of professional acquisition officers, then there must exist sufficient incentive to attract the brightest and best qualified officers to its ranks. Once all current FA 97 officers are members of the AAC and designation of FA 97 for officers in the future automatically means inclusion in the AAC, then these centrally selected procurement commands should be

the career capping assignments that FA 97 officers make as their goals.

5. Select officers for Program Manager and Product Manager positions on the basis of those best qualified, regardless of functional area designation.

For the Acquisition Corps to achieve long term viability and for FA 97's to play a fully integrated role, they should not be discriminated against for selection for program/product management positions.

C. ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a. How did the current state of the Army contracting officer and the Army Acquisition Corps come to be ?

Chapter III, *Background*, covers the history of acquisition legislative reform from the beginning of the last decade to the present. In this atmosphere of indignation at the excesses of the defense establishment, the Congress culminated its efforts of revamping the defense procurement system with the passage of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act. This legislation mandates the creation of Acquisition Corps within each of the Armed Services and has set the stage of procurement for both military and civilian acquisition professionals well into the 21st Century.

- b. What are the requirements for FA 97 officers as mandated by the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act ?

The provisions of DAWIA as implemented by the Office of the Proponent of Functional Area 97 include the complete integration of Functional Area 97 into the Army Acquisition Corps and the institution of a single track career path for FA 97 officers as members of the AAC.

Additionally, DAWIA has caused the centrally selected procurement commands to be restricted to only those officers who are members of the AAC. Long an area of contention, program and product manager positions are now available for qualified FA 97 officers.

- c. What is the current state of thinking as expressed by experienced FA 97 officers as to what the knowledge and skill base of an FA 97 officer should be ?

An FA 97 officer requires, above all else, a sound understanding of how the business of civilian contractors is conducted. As part of this, the FA 97 officer needs a sound business sense, which enables him to distill and analyze vast amounts of information from disparate sources and make the business decision of most benefit to the Government.

- d. What skills are critical for the FA 97 officer to possess ?

These critical skills include the general business sense as discussed in "c" above. As components of this business sense

are included a thorough understanding of financial and cost accounting, computer literacy, and the ability to motivate subordinates to mission accomplishment and the concomitant management of resources.

e. What skills are highly desirable for an FA 97 officer to possess ?

The development of specialized accounting skill and the ability to conduct formal military style briefings are both highly desirable attributes of an FA 97 officer.

f. How might technical and managerial skills be distinguished from each other ?

Technical skills are those skills which enable the FA 97 officer to either accomplish the task himself, e.g. cost analysis, or to have the understanding to be able to communicate with those specialists who accomplish it in his stead. Managerial skills are those which enable the FA 97 officer to marshall the resources of time and money at his disposal to accomplish the contracting mission.

D. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Explore the contents of the transition course provided to assimilate FA 97 officers from their former troop assignments into the contracting environment.
2. Explore how the FA 97 position structure might be realigned

in the wake of DAWIA and the impending force drawdown.

3. Explore the feasibility of sending all FA 97 officers to the Naval Postgraduate School or a similar such military program for their advanced degrees.

4. Compare and contrast the benefits of a civilian masters of business administration program vice one such as the Naval Postgraduate School offers.

5. Explore the possible realignment of the career path and progression of FA 97 in the wake of DAWIA and the impending force drawdown.

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